



**Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland**  
School of Public Policy, University of Maryland

# **The Churches, Foreign Policy, and Global Poverty: New Approaches, New Partnerships**

By Mary Jo Bane

CISSM Working Paper  
November 2011

This paper was prepared with generous support from the Skoll Global Threats Fund.

Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland  
4113 Van Munching Hall, School of Public Policy  
University of Maryland  
College Park, MD 20742  
(301) 405-7601



## **The Churches, Foreign Policy, and Global Poverty: New Approaches? New Partnerships?**

By Mary Jo Bane

Poverty, although it has declined dramatically in the last few decades, affects more than a billion people in the contemporary world. Their levels of material well being, education, and opportunities are little changed from those of their ancestors. Much is now understood about the causes of lack of development and poverty, but in many places progress is depressingly slow. U.S. attitudes and policy toward global poverty have been and remain ambivalent and inconsistent, at best.

American Christianity, vibrant and relevant to the lives of the majority of Americans, is increasingly engaged in international humanitarian and missionary work, through denominational bodies, international faith-based NGOs and congregations. Millions of American Christians contribute billions of dollars to humanitarian and evangelical efforts, and millions are themselves personally involved in one or another international activity, much of it directed at the alleviation of poverty and hunger.

Perhaps American Christianity has the potential to help shape a more humane and sensible response to global poverty on the part of American society as a whole and the American government in particular? This paper attempts to explore both the potential and the challenges.

### **The Global Engagement of American Christian Churches**

Christian theology teaches that Christians are called to both care for their neighbors and spread the gospel; both the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Great Commission<sup>1</sup> are central texts for Christians. What this means in practice differs by tradition and by individual, resulting in a wide variety of interpretations of duties toward others and of practices for carrying out those duties.

Two aspects of religious involvement are worth considering: the work of large faith-based humanitarian NGOs and the activity of congregations, small groups and individual Christians.

Although religious bodies have been engaged in missionary work for many centuries, sometimes accompanied by direct humanitarian service, it was after World War II that a few large religiously based humanitarian organizations came into their own. These include Catholic Relief Services, World Vision International and Church World Services among others, reflecting the involvement, respectively, of Catholics, evangelical Protestants and mainstream Protestants.

These organizations started out as relief organizations responding to the devastation wrought by war. As time went on, they and other humanitarian organizations (like CARE and Oxfam, which also had their roots in the post-war world) became more professional and more dependent on funding from governments. They also expanded their missions from relief to recovery and development; to peace-building; and to human rights and justice.<sup>2</sup> They are now a substantial presence in the international development arena, spending \$2 to 3 billion per year.<sup>3</sup>

Sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow carried out both a large survey of church-goers and a qualitative study of church leaders to discover what Christians in America actually do to support evangelization and service to the global poor. He reports his findings in *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches*<sup>4</sup>, which also includes extensive historical material on missionary and humanitarian efforts of the churches.

He found that a large majority of Christian congregations are engaged in one or more missionary or humanitarian efforts overseas. Often this takes the form of providing financial and prayer support to the efforts of denominational boards or faith-based NGOs, like World Vision International or Catholic Relief Services. Private contributions are important to the budgets of these organizations, and they devote considerable energy to publicizing their work and the needs to which it responds, including sending representatives to speak at church services and providing materials for congregation based adult education and discussion groups.

Wuthnow's survey also revealed that surprisingly large numbers of American Christians are personally involved in the developing world, with perhaps 1.5 million per year participating in direct short-term missionary or humanitarian efforts overseas. Because of this congregational engagement, tens of millions of American Christians are not only exposed to the gospel teachings about caring for the poor and spreading the word of God but are also much more direct participants in carrying out international work.

This engagement probably leads to a greater awareness of the existence of global poverty and its human costs. It might lead to support for American humanitarian efforts and policy action in addressing global poverty as well as to support for the faith-based NGOs that that work on the ground. It may not, however, lead to an accurate understanding of the nature of global poverty because of the idiosyncratic nature of the places and situations with which congregations and faith-based NGOs have contact. Congregations often partner with one overseas congregation as a way of personalizing their engagement; they may choose an overseas partner on the basis of personal connections or convenience. Overseas mission trips often go to the safest, most conveniently reached or most welcoming places. Even if the partner congregation is "typical" in important ways, it is very difficult for U.S. congregations to get a sense of the diverse settings of global poverty. The history of the large NGOs suggests that the places in which they work are in

many ways accidents of their founding events and their preferences for working with actual or potential co-religionists.

The kind of engagement that congregations have may also generate a very misleading sense of the most effective approaches to addressing global poverty. Congregations are mostly involved in small-scale direct service activities—helping to build a hospital, collecting and delivering books to a school, buying religious objects for a church. The work of the religious NGOs that receives the most attention is relief work after natural and human disasters. Direct humanitarian work, performed by Americans for others, becomes the picture of global engagement that religious Americans hold. Business development is occasionally part of the picture, public institution building almost never.

This emphasis on direct service is, of course, consistent with the example of Jesus—who lived in very different times. Arguably, it is the appropriate mission for humanitarian agencies, which have struggled over their histories with questions of “mission-creep,” paternalism, and engagement, or not, with politics and governments. Direct service can also help religious actors resolve tensions around evangelization. Missionary work per se, aimed at conversion to Christianity, has something of a bad name these days, even in evangelical circles, since freedom of conscience and religion are accepted as important rights even by those denominations that hold as a matter of doctrine that acceptance of Jesus Christ as savior is necessary for salvation. Humanitarian work, in contrast, is seen as unambiguously responsive to the message and example of Jesus in feeding the hungry, healing the sick and bringing the good news to the poor. Direct service is thus an important component of witnessing to the gospel, sometimes accompanied by explicit preaching, sometimes not. The most direct service—distributing food, building houses, staffing a clinic—comes to be seen as the most faithful witness, and is certainly personally satisfying for the server. But it is not at all clear that direct service by Christians from rich countries is the best approach to global poverty; in some circumstances it may even be harmful.

Another aspect of the sensibility that can develop from direct service encounters is a perception that government, ours and theirs, multinational quasi-governmental organizations like the World Bank and multi-national corporations are irrelevant to or even harmful for addressing poverty. The perception that U.S. government foreign aid is wasteful and incompetently administered is as prevalent among Christians as among the public as a whole. Host country governments are often perceived as and sometimes are corrupt and not to be trusted, and best gone around. Wasteful and failed World Bank projects are common enough that they are likely to be encountered. Foreign investment and trade may be seen through the lens of the evils of sweat shops and a romantic view of rural life.

In truth, however, comparing development successes and failures over the last few decades highlights the importance of large scale institution building. All this is to say that there are huge challenges in developing an approach to global poverty that is both compassionate and effective, that builds institutions and capacity for long term development, and that can constructively bring together the activities of religious groups with sensible government policy. But this is what is needed to address global poverty today.

### **The Changing Shape and Nature of Global Poverty**

Although there are legitimate questions about the definition and measurement of poverty and many questions about its causes and cures, a few facts seem to be more or less clear.

There has been tremendous progress in reducing material poverty in the last thirty years, and according to some estimates, accelerating progress in the last five. Using the best recent data and the standard World Bank definition of the income (or consumption) poverty line at \$1.25/person/day, World Bank analysts Chen and Ravallion estimate that the number of poor in the world fell from 1.9 billion in 1981 to 1.4 billion in 2005; the poverty rate more than halved over that period, from 52 percent in 1981 to 25 percent in 2005.<sup>5</sup> A more recent paper, by Chandy and Gertz of the Brookings Institution, estimated that the number of poor in the world fell to under 900 million in 2010, a world poverty rate of perhaps 16 percent.<sup>6</sup>

The most important driver of this reduction was economic growth in many countries, a few of them very large. China's remarkable economic growth since 1978 led to a reduction in the number of poor of more than half a billion people. More recently, India's growth has led to large reductions in poverty rates in that country. Other countries have also seen noticeable reductions in poverty.

By and large, up until the last five or ten years, poor people lived overwhelmingly in poor countries; i.e., countries with low per capita national income.<sup>7</sup> Reducing poverty required increasing national income growth in poor countries. This happened in many places: by 2010, for example, China, India, Nigeria and Pakistan, among others, were considered low middle income countries. Overall economic growth led to poverty reduction, but the growth stories of different countries varies a good deal. Openness to the world economy characterizes the rapid growers, as does rural to urban migration, reasonably good governance, domestic peace and investment in education and public health. But the "Washington consensus," with its emphasis on completely free trade and limited government, does not describe either China or India. It is also worth noting that foreign aid played a very limited role, if any, in the most dramatic growth stories.

By 2010, according to the estimates of Chandy and Gertz, only about 40 percent of the world's poor lived in low income countries. There are still large numbers of poor in China, India, Nigeria and other rapidly growing countries that are now classified as low middle income, but their poverty is now primarily an internal issue for them. These countries need to continue to grow, to manage their growth so that it is pro-poor, and to develop safety nets and other redistributive mechanisms to help those left behind. The role of the U.S. foreign aid and religious in addressing poverty in these countries is mostly to encourage and perhaps provide technical assistance to their governments toward these ends, and to participate in structuring a world economy in which the continued growth of these countries is possible. (The U.S. could perhaps also set an example of a rich country that takes care of its poor, but it seems to be moving away from that stance.) Neither U.S. foreign aid nor the Christian charity of foreigners is necessary for addressing poverty in these countries, except, perhaps, when direct humanitarian aid is required in response to natural disasters.

It is, however, important to understand the processes by which poverty declined in successful countries. Although every country has its own story, poverty reduction came as a result of economic growth, and economic growth came because of private sector investment and openness to the world market. Sensible policies for both welcoming and controlling private foreign investment were important. Reasonably good governance, often but not universally democratic, was also important, as was investment in the health and educational institutions that build human capital. These strategies need to be recognized and appreciated in assessments of development possibilities and the role of both public and private aid.

On the other hand, not all countries are on a growth path, and in some per capita income has actually declined during the same time period that China, India and others were growing so rapidly. A "bottom billion" is being left behind in countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia, that are not only poor but also, often, poorly governed and beset by conflict.<sup>8</sup> According the Chandy and Gertz analysis, almost half of the world's poor now live in fragile states, beset by conflict and poor governance. Some of these states, like the DRC (Congo), are very large; others, like Haiti, are special concerns of the U.S.. These are the most difficult situations to think about and pose the most challenges for both official and voluntary actors, for both American foreign policy and internationally engaged American religion.

### **The Example of Haiti**

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, located a two hour plane ride from the richest. It has a long history of relationships with the U.S., much of which is quite troubling. It also has a long history of relationships with NGOs, many of which are faith-based. After a devastating earthquake in January 2010, Haiti was the focus of an enormous amount of

international attention and the recipient of an extraordinary amount of both public and private charity. It provides an interesting example of religious engagement, and also of the challenges and tensions that face both religious organizations and public policy.

Haiti is an example of a country that is home to part of the bottom billion, a country that is not on a growth path toward economic development and poverty reduction. Its economy rests on subsistence agriculture, informal businesses, international assistance and remittances from the Haitian diaspora living abroad. It is also an example of a fragile state beset by racial and class conflicts. Even before the earthquake of January 2010, Haiti struggled with the legacy of a long series of violent dictatorships, with disputed electoral processes, civil conflict and dysfunctional government. After the earthquake destroyed nearly all of the government's physical infrastructure and killed a large fraction of public employees, the government found itself even weaker, certainly relative to what it needed to accomplish in relief and reconstruction.

Something like 10,000 NGOs operate in Haiti, a higher density of NGOs than any other place in the world except for India. The large professional NGOs—CRS, Oxfam, CARE, World Vision etc.—of course operate in Haiti, as do UN connected organizations like the World Food Program and the World Health Organization. In addition, thousands of small NGOs, many if not most of them faith-based, operate all over the country. After the earthquake, volunteers poured into Haiti, some from organizations that had previously worked in Haiti, others brand new. Even many months after the earthquake, planes from Miami to Port au Prince were full of volunteer groups in t-shirts with religious motifs.

I have been involved with and supportive of one, which I will call the Saint Joseph Haiti Foundation (not its real name), which is probably in the middle of the pack in terms of scale and competence. It was founded out of a Catholic parish in Massachusetts in the 1970s, and almost by chance focused its work on a village in the southern interior of Haiti. The group built a hospital in the village, and helps to staff it with visiting medical professionals from the U.S. SJHF also brings groups down, mostly from Catholic parishes, on “work retreats,” which combine prayer and spiritual reflection with an opportunity to become acquainted with Haiti and to do a bit of productive work. It has expanded in recent years to do some projects in the village that are not related to the hospital and that contribute to education and to economic development. It hires a modest number of Haitians. It operates independently of the government and mostly of other NGOs. It appears to do good work and to make modest contributions to the health of the people of one small part of Haiti.

Replicated thousands of times around Haiti, groups like SJHF contribute to the well being of some portion of Haitians, and provide an experience of serving the poor and encountering global poverty for thousands of Americans. But the total effect is much less than the sum of the individual parts.

What Haiti needs to develop over the long term is reasonably clear: increased agricultural productivity, reforestation, business development of all sizes and types of ownership, investment in the human capital producing sectors of education and health, internal peace and security, and functioning government. In the short term it needs recovery and reconstruction efforts that clear the rubble (much still remains, almost two years later) and replace the buildings destroyed in the earthquake in a way that lays the foundation for longer term development and provides desperately needed jobs and training opportunities to Haitians. It undoubtedly needs foreign assistance, both public and private, to jump-start the development processes, but mostly it needs to develop its own capacities and institutions and to harness the talents and resources of the large Haitian diaspora.

Most NGO efforts in Haiti contribute only modestly to overall development. Improving health and education, and constructing small scale infrastructure, which some groups do, obviously contribute, but not in a coordinated or planned way. The NGO efforts generally provide few jobs for Haitians, and in some cases may substitute volunteer American labor for Haitian, including the substitution of educated Americans for training Haitians. They seldom focus on business development and are often openly hostile to foreign business investment. They almost never do anything to strengthen government or governance, the inadequacy of which may in fact be the most important obstacle to Haitian development.

The work of at least some groups after the earthquake appears to have done actual harm to the development process. By providing free medical services in the temporary camps erected for earthquake victims, for example, they may have encouraged people to stay in the camps, and delegitimized what local health services existed. Some groups raised expectations for services of various sorts and then failed to deliver or worse. Some well meaning volunteers who could neither speak the language nor interact knowledgably with Haiti commanded resources that could better have been used in other ways. According to accounts from people in the field, huge amounts of time and energy were devoted, not very productively, to endless meetings aimed at coordinating and rationalizing the work of so many disparate and unevenly prepared volunteers. Many of the volunteers, especially the small religious groups, seemed to be more focused on delivering Christian service as they defined it than on meeting the needs of Haitians.<sup>9</sup>

U.S. foreign aid to Haiti also has a mixed history. The U.S. army occupied Haiti between 1915 and 1934. Haiti's location in the Caribbean made it strategically important to the U.S., and aid has been provided intermittently since then. It was cut off during the years of the dictatorship of Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier, but re-instituted when his son (Baby Doc) seemed to promise reform. The U.S. supported the first democratically elected Haitian president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was overthrown by a coup a year after his election, after which the U.S. withdrew support and imposed an economic embargo that contributed to the economic devastation of the



country. Aristide was reinstated as president by U.S. troops in 1994, succeeded by the democratically elected Rene Preval, elected again in 2000 and overthrown again in 2004. Because of disputes over the parliamentary elections in 2000, U.S. aid to Haiti was redirected from the government to NGOs. The U.S. military was a crucial participant in recovery efforts after the earthquake. The pattern of U.S. frustration with the Haitian government has continued, however, contributing to a self-fulfilling prophecy of incompetent government with no resources functioning badly and a vicious circle of aid going to NGOs who provide services without building crucial institutions.

Haiti is probably an extreme example of the lack of fit between well-meaning religious engagement efforts and sensible development practice and of the failures of international engagement more generally. Because of its closeness to the U.S. and its history of natural and human-made disasters, it has attracted more than its share of attention from American Christian do-gooders. But it is not unique either in its development needs or in the type of NGO engagement it hosts. The example of Haiti may help stimulate thinking about the intersection of development needs and good practices with the roles that religious groups and American foreign policy do and could play.

### **The Religious Sector, U.S. Foreign Policy and Global Poverty**

Despite the failures of religious NGO and other development efforts that the example of Haiti illustrates, the emerging shape of the world may present new opportunities for cooperation and complementarity between the religious sector and U.S. foreign policy in addressing global poverty. Both sectors are struggling with internal tensions and questions about their roles in the changing world. Looking at these struggles in the two sectors reveals interesting overlaps along crucial dimensions.

Mission. The religious NGOs and the congregations and small religious groups engaged internationally have a mixed mission of evangelization and service, driven at least ostensibly by the Christian values of compassion and service, the example of Jesus, and the conviction that all men and women are brothers and sisters equal before God and tied together by their common heritage as daughters and sons of God. Over time, the emphasis of many of them has moved from pure evangelization to service as witness. They have also moved from the commitments to relief after natural and human disasters that characterized their early years to development and peace-building activities.

U.S. foreign policy also has a dual mission, of advancing American interests and improving the lives of people around the world. The U.S. State Department's mission statement commits it to "Advance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by

helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty and act responsibly within the international system.”

What is interesting is that although the missions of the two sectors are by no means identical, and their foundational motivations quite different, there is substantial overlap in their focuses on development and peace-building in the poor and conflict-ridden places of the world. Neither sector needs to fully accept the mission of the other in order to share a common commitment to the goal of addressing global poverty, which is increasingly associated with conflict and with dysfunctional institutions.

Places. The religious sector has often chosen the places in which it will work for reasons unrelated to objective needs. Denominational organizations work with their co-religionists or in places where they see possibilities for conversion; for example, the early focus of CRS in Vietnam. Others are founded because a charismatic leader visits someplace and is struck by the need; the founder of World Vision International reacted powerfully to the suffering children he met in China. Congregations choose to work in villages where they have a connection, often places that are reasonably convenient, safe and welcoming.

U.S. government development efforts have historically been closely tied to larger U.S. foreign policy interests. During the cold war, for example, development aid flowed to countries that were perceived as actual or potential bastions against communism, even when that meant supporting corrupt and oppressive leaders. Even after the end of the cold war, disproportionate aid has gone to countries or regions of strategic interest, for example the Middle East and more recently Pakistan and Afghanistan. The current list of recipients of USAID aid reflects these foreign policy considerations, but also, partly because of overlap and partly because it is increasingly recognized that poor unstable states are a threat to the international community, includes some of the countries of the bottom billion.<sup>10</sup> (The glaring exception is Israel, a very rich and very small country, which receives the fourth largest amount of U.S. aid.)

A list of the countries of the bottom billion, the places most in need of development and poverty reduction, would overlap with the lists of places where the U.S. religious sector works and where U.S. aid goes, but the overlap would not be particularly striking. It would also be a list of places where it is hard and dangerous to work, not only because of their poverty but also because of war, internal conflict, corrupt government and lack of security. Understanding the location of contemporary global poverty is an undertaking on which the two sectors could cooperate, and could lay the foundations, perhaps, for a more effective focusing of scarce resources in both sectors.

Practices. Both the religious sector and the aid community presumably have an interest in achieving their goals effectively and in making good use of resources which are constrained in both sectors. For both sectors, alleviating hunger, improving health and education, increasing employment and stimulating infrastructure and business development are important goals. Both sectors have had experience with both successes and failures in achieving these goals. Both sectors can benefit from the new knowledge that is coming out of careful analyses of successes and failures from the academic development community.

A good deal of knowledge is being developed through careful experiments on what programs work most effectively at the community level, which give good insights into how to structure and improve health, education and micro-finance programs, among others.<sup>11</sup> Both the religious and the public sector can benefit from and contribute to this growing body of knowledge. There is also substantial knowledge about the processes of development overall and the conditions which seem to have enabled some countries, like China and India, to successfully develop.<sup>12</sup> Familiarity with this knowledge could help both the religious and the public sector to avoid doing harm. It could, for example, alert the religious sector to focus its lobbying and educational efforts on trade, immigration and governance policy as well as on aid.

Relationships. If there is truth to my argument that the religious and foreign policy sectors have overlapping missions and overlapping interests in improving the effectiveness of their efforts both by better geographical targeting and by learning from new development knowledge, then it may also be the case that improved cooperation between as well as within sectors toward common goals is possible and desirable. There are and have been tensions between the two sectors historically and perhaps inevitably. The founding ethic of the humanitarian NGOs, including the large religious NGOs, espoused the values of neutrality, impartiality and independence from government involvement and state interference. As time went on and the world became more complicated and dangerous, they found themselves needing to work with and to receive protection from government. As their missions increasingly focused on development work, they came to rely on government contracts. Both their efforts and the efforts of entities like USAID and the World Bank increasingly came to rely on partnerships across organizations and sectors. This may be the time as both sectors are rethinking their mission and their practices, for stronger relations between them.

## **Going Forward**

I close with a few recommendations to the main actors on how to take advantage of newly aligned possibilities for effectively addressing global poverty.

Congregations and small groups. My first observation is that religiously motivated international engagement, of all the sorts that are now quite widespread, is a good thing, for Christians, for America and for the world, if only because it increases knowledge and empathy among Americans for the poor around the world. Religious leaders should be praised for and encouraged in doing it. They should work to improve both its quantity and its quality. They should also educate themselves as best they can about the larger context in which they operate.

Large professional faith-based NGOs. These organizations, like World Vision and Catholic Relief Services, are in a good position to help congregations and smaller groups. They have struggled themselves with the tension between evangelization and service, and can help smaller congregations and groups think through the issues, recognizing that different groups will reach different, but acceptable, conclusions. They can help smaller congregations and groups make sensible choices about how and where to work, so that their work is consistent with, or at least not detrimental to, the overall development efforts of the countries in which they work, in addition to supporting their evangelical missions. They can also provide context and analysis both for their own international work and for the smaller scale diverse engagement of congregations, helping everyone to understand the larger picture of poverty and development and where their individual efforts fit in.

The large NGOs, whether religiously-based or secular, need to continue and sharpen their deliberations on the tensions inherent in their work in the contemporary world: tensions between relief work and development; between their traditional arenas of focus and the areas of greatest need; between independence and neutrality and the benefits of cooperation with governments and military interventions; between the mission focus of their donors and the needs and agency of the people with whom they work. The post-cold war world is a much more complicated world for the NGOs than the world in which they began their work, and holds for them inherent tensions. It is increasingly a world in which serving and bringing the good news to the poor means working in places that are often conflict-ridden, corrupt and dangerous. This fact, in turn, means that NGOs have to figure out if and when they will work with less than perfect governments, if and when they will accept protection from or cooperate with military forces, and if and when they will leave a country because of danger to their own staff.

There is no one right place for NGOs along the continuums of relief-development, independence-cooperation, traditional mission-new demands. Each NGO needs to deliberate on these tensions and find a place for itself that is consistent with its mission, values and capacities. Each NGO also needs to have in place, as many of them do, mechanisms for continually learned about the contexts in which they operate and about the most effective practices for achieving their objectives. Not every NGO needs to resolve the tensions in the same way; there are many acceptable and appropriate points along the various continua. All of them, however, almost certainly need to pay more attention than they traditionally have to expanding participation and

empowerment of the people with whom they work. They also need to pay much more attention to other NGOs, so that their work can be complementary and cooperative, rather than competitive.

The U.S. government foreign policy and aid communities. The American foreign policy and aid communities are also struggling with tensions around their roles in a post-cold war, post 9/11 world. The US Department of State articulates two prongs of strategic activity: diplomacy and development. In formulating their strategy for development, DoS and USAID are of course, faced with resource limitations given the constraints imposed by federal deficits and a general public disdain for “foreign aid.” They also have a mixed history of success and failure to consider, as many recent analyses of foreign aid failures have made clear.<sup>13</sup> Legitimate criticism is levied at aid that supported corrupt and exploitative governments, leaving their countries worse off than before aid. Other legitimate criticisms are made of aid displacing local agriculture or industry; for example, distributing imported rice free rather than buying from local farmers, or using foreign labor and contractors for infrastructure building rather than local resources.

In resolving its tensions, the foreign aid community may be able to learn from and with the internationally engaged religious sector. They can experiment and learn together about the most effective ways to use limited development resources to reduce poverty.

The two sectors can also help each other remember and live their missions. The religious sector is in a good position to remind the foreign policy and aid community that its mission is to pursue democracy, security and prosperity in the world, and to push American policy toward responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of the poor. Their advocacy and educational activities can emphasize the importance of compassion and solidarity with the poor, themes central to American Christianity. The public foreign aid sectors, in its contracting policies as well as its cooperative arrangements, can remind the religious sectors of its commitments to serve those with greatest needs and to do so effectively.

It may well be overly optimistic to suggest that American Christianity and American foreign policy can work together constructively to address global poverty. But surely, given both the needs and the opportunities suggested by the state of the world, it is worth a try.

### **About the Author**

Mary Jo Bane is the Thornton Bradshaw Professor of Public Policy and Management at the Harvard Kennedy School, where she has been on the faculty since 1981. From 1993 to 1996 she was Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. From 1992 to 1993 she was Commissioner of the New York State Department of

Social Services, where she previously served as Executive Deputy Commissioner from 1984 to 1986. From 1987 to 1992, at the Kennedy School, she was Malcolm Wiener Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy. From 2006 to 2011, she was Academic Dean at the Kennedy School. She is the author of a number of books and articles on poverty, welfare, families, and the role of churches in civic life. She lives in Dorchester, Massachusetts, with her husband Kenneth Winston and enjoys hiking, gardening, and reading novels.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:19-20: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> An interesting recent history of humanitarianism, which includes a focus on CSR and World Vision International as case studies is Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, Cornell University Press, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> But to place this number in context, it is worth noting that in 2010, World Bank Disbursements were \$29 billion, much, of course, in the form of loans. Another startling number is the estimate of the volume of remittances going to poor countries from their diasporas, at least \$100 billion in 2004.

<sup>4</sup> University of California Press, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Shaoou Chen and Martin Ravallion, "The Developing World Is Poorer than We Thought, but No Less Successful in the Fight Against Poverty," World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4703, August 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Laurence Chandy and Geoffrey Gertz, "Poverty in Numbers: The Changing State of Global Poverty from 2005 to 2015," Brookings Institution Policy Brief 2011-01, January 2011.

<sup>7</sup> For 2010, the World Bank defines a low income country as one in which Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is less than \$1005, adjusted for purchasing power. Low middle income countries are those with per capita GNI between \$1006 and \$3975; upper middle income countries between \$3976 and \$12,275. Countries with per capita GNIs over \$12,275 are considered upper income. Per capita GNI in the United States in 2010 was \$47,140.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> An excellent collection of observations and essays on the relief effort after the earthquake is Paul Farmer, *Haiti after the earthquake*, Public Affairs Press, 2011. Farmer's own organization, Partners in Health, is a notable exception to much of what I describe in this section, and has made extraordinary to develop Haitian capacity and support the Haitian government.

<sup>10</sup> The USAID website lists these countries as the top ten aid recipients in 2010: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Haiti, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Kenya, Sudan and Jordan.

<sup>11</sup> Two excellent new summaries of this work are Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty*, Public Affairs Press 2011, and Dean Karlan and Jacob Appel, *More than Good Intentions: How a new economics is helping to solve global poverty*, Dutton Publishing 2011.

<sup>12</sup> An interesting and readable new interpretation of this work is Michael Spence, *The Next Convergence: The future of economic growth in a multispeed world*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011

<sup>13</sup> For example, William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden*, Penguin Press, 2006, and Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid* Farar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.