

Summary Evaluation of Urban Mission Issues Work – Outcome 3

1. Outline Process

Outcome 3 set for the project was:

- the identification of the key **issues** for urban mission and theology

1.1 Research

In 2004-5 128 urban mission practitioners were interviewed by the Project to ask them what were the issues that they were facing for which they felt they were inadequately trained. The full research Report is in *Next Steps* 2005.

The issues raised by their responses could be grouped into three areas:

- making sense of conflicting demands, sometimes between community and congregation
- having the time to do administration to be freed for the tasks of ministry
- having confidence in applying Jesus' mission (as in Luke 4:16-21) as a kingdom, and therefore a church, priority.

The first and third are about a capacity to integrate theology and action – sometimes called contextual or reflective or practical theology. Most felt their training had not equipped them to do this (but bear in mind many were trained over 10 years ago).

There was also a cluster of problems identified that required skills that could be acquired through training and support from the generalist voluntary and community sector

Overall the research showed that contextualising theology and making sense of the multiple tasks and demands of urban ministry, where fresh expressions of church are often developed, were the key needs.

So the Project Annual Review in June 2005 recommended that the Project should concentrate on broadening the education and training for lay and ordained people in the skills needed.

1.2 Symposium

During the remainder of 2005 and the first half of 2006, the Project identified and made contact with various colleges and independent programmes, delivering urban mission training. In December 2005, a meeting of principals of, largely Anglican, theological training colleges has held by the Commission for Urban Life and Faith, which the UMDA attended.

It was felt that it would be useful to bring the wider grouping together, with the adult learning staff of the major denominations and some urban mission practitioners, to share what was already on offer and to look at whether consensus on the necessary content of training could be reached. The Hind Report process about ordination training was still on-going, so the day concentrated upon training for lay people.

Especial effort was made to include representatives of Black-led churches.

A 1-day symposium was held in November 2006, attended by 33 representatives of courses, denominational bodies and agencies. This is fully reported in *Urban Mission Training Symposium 2006 Report*, published in August 2007.

The symposium identified the need for an on-going piece of work to refine the raw suggestions for urban training courses developed on the day.

Finding a common date for this proved extremely difficult, and the final write-up was much delayed until August 07, by the tardiness of contributions. A decision was taken to convene a follow-up for October 07. This had to be deferred to late November due to clashes with half-term holidays in different parts of the UK.

2. Evaluation

2.1 Research

Although this was a relatively simple piece of work, it was comprehensive in the number of people reached – 128 people across 8 denominations – and was rigorous in its methodology. This was sufficient to gain credibility with senior denominational and college staff in order to request a meeting, and to invite them to the Symposium.

It was also one of the few pieces of work on the topic. A study undertaken for the Baptist Union of Great Britain during 2006 reached similar conclusions.

The research was also helpful in giving a focus to what was a very diffuse Project Outcome.

2.2 Symposium

This was well attended – 33 people out of an invitation list of 80 – and representing a very wide range of traditions.

Two people attended from a Black-led institution and one Black academic from a college with a high percentage of Black students.

The mix of views was wide. But the process of the workshops enabled the building of consensus and a high level of output was achieved during the afternoon.

2.3 Follow-up

The follow-up process was stymied by three things: the problem with fixing dairy dates at shorter notice; the slowness of people in returning their items for the report – this could not then be circulated to stimulate interest; both compounded by the lack of admin time within the Project to do the chasing of either of these.

The Report was finally sent out in August 07. Had the Project been finishing in Aug 07, there would have been much less work on fundraising and related matters, and therefore more time available after the Symposium to set up the follow-up meeting and complete the Report. A more substantial piece of work on curriculum recommendations would have been completed.

It is hoped that the mailout in August 07 and the invitations for an event in October will result in the completion of the recommended curriculum content.

The next part of this work will be to promote greater use by colleges and courses.

Erica Dunmow, UMDA
August 2007

Jan 08 Update

Training has become Goal Four for the 2007-10 phase of the Project:

To promote shared endeavours in recruitment, training and education for urban mission and ministry, both lay and ordained, with appropriate forms of recognition and accreditation, and to further the outworking of the *Faithful Cities* report's recommendations on training, especially for lay people on a wide and inclusive basis, in close communication and appropriate collaboration with the Church of England's Bishop for Urban Life and Faith and its ongoing 'reception' process.

A further Symposium was held in Bow, London on 22 November 07 to build upon the work begun in 06. The focus was on church planting into the urban. Considerable effort was made to widen the range on invitees and speakers.

An early autumn meeting with both Katei Kirby CEO of ACEA (African-Caribbean Evangelical Alliance) and David Muir, Head of Social Action at EA (Evangelical Alliance) gave the challenge that the Projects' best service to the training needs of Black majority churches was to engage them at the start of the process, and include their thinking.

This confirmed the UMDA's strategy that was already being implemented in making direct contact with the training departments of several black-led denominations.

Those making presentations on the day were:

- Household of Faith Church, leadership for lay people course (Bishop Francis Waihenya)
- Church Related Community Development Training – (Lesley Husselbee South North-West Training Partnership, Manchester)
- *Crucible* – church planting course - ALOVE (Salvation Army) and Urban Expression (Terry Jones, Baptist Union of GB)
- New Testament Church of God, Church planting (Rev'd Phyllis Thompson)

The event was not as well attended as the Nov 06 event, due to problems with the date change, but the thinking that went on was detailed and valuable and built on that from Nov 07.

Future plans

The Project is committed to producing a revised, combined Report of the two events and to disseminating that to all interested parties. The text of the Report of the second Symposium is ready awaiting approval from two speakers. This will be distributed on its own to all invitees for comment, and then edited together with the 07 Report.

A major funding bid has been submitted to support this area of work:

- to produce the combined Report to a more professional standard to help with its promotion
- to hold a further Symposium to launch it to an audience of denominational decision-makers and theological college staff
- to explore the development of the kind of centre/hub for training that might be part of the process of ensuring that all urban mission practitioners have access to the specialist training that they need. Given the strongly contextual emphasis in urban mission it is likely that several of these will be needed across the UK.

The partners to be involved in each centre/hub to include at least one of each of:

- a black-led denomination;
- a Christian social action/community development agency;
- an independent Christian training project;
- a traditional white-led denomination;
- bodies with an existing, strong track record of urban, contextual ministry and mission training.

Erica Dunmow, UMDA
January 2008