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# THE ROLE OF MINISTERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: THE DRCA OFS AS A CASE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Orange Free State (DRCA OFS), is one of the Dutch Reformed family of churches<sup>2</sup> in South Africa established in 1910 for black South Africans. The analysis of the DRCA OFS mission and diaconal ministry reveals that the mission in the DRCA OFS is declining, that community projects are used to address mainly immediate needs, and that there are no strategies to address urgent social challenges in society. In the light of this, the article intends to analyse the role of DRCA OFS ministers in community development in South Africa. The leading research question is:

- 1 This article is part of NRF-FRF Sabbatical Grant Reference no NFSG170904261632, Unique grant no 112203.
- 2 Dutch Reformed family in SA before 1994 consisted of the DRC (for white Afrikaners), DRCA (for black South Africans) and Reformed Church in Africa (RCA: for Indians), and Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC: for the mixed race). This DRC family still exist in post 1994 with Uniting Reformed Church in SA (URCSA: consists mainly of mixed race and blacks in SA) as a new member and DRMC no longer exist as it formed part of URCSA in 1994.

To what extent are DRCA OFS ministers involved in community development in South Africa?

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership has various roles to play within society. Burns (1978:3) endeavoured to summarise the key role of leadership as promoting human development and mobilising towards actual social action. Africa, in particular, is affected by the various roles its leadership plays within the society. According to Mbigi (2005:1), leadership in Africa is responsible for enabling the development and progress of an individual, society, and institutions.

This article chiefly aims to analyse the role of DRCA OFS ministers in the development of the South African society. The leading research question is as follows: To what extent are DRCA OFS ministers involved in the development of the South African society? The DRCA OFS is used as a case study and as one of the mission products of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

The DRCA OFS is one of the Dutch Reformed family of churches established in Bloemfontein in 1910. It was initially established for black South Africans; hence, its present-day membership consists mainly blacks. In democratic South Africa, the DRCA has four regional synods<sup>3</sup>, one of which is the DRCA OFS. In 2010, the DRCA OFS had over sixty ministers and over one hundred and forty-six congregations. In 2015, the number of ministers had dropped to forty, due to death, retirement, and the transfer of ministers from one synod to another. At present, over fifty per cent of the congregations have no ministers (Pali 2017:2).

## 2. DEFINITION OF DEVELOPMENT

For a long time, development was understood as making available basic goods and services to those in need, in order to improve their quality of life. Swart (2006:15) calls this approach to development a basic-needs approach. These basic goods and services were often understood as material goods, such as money as an income, infrastructure, and health and welfare services. However, Swart (2006:15) argues that the basic-needs approach did not last long, as it was criticised as being materialistic and paternalistic. Consequently, this led to poverty, unemployment, and many unfulfilled basic needs.

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3 The four regional synods of DRCA post 1994 are DRCA Phororo, DRCA OFS, DRCA Southern and Northern Transvaal, and DRCA Eastern Cape.

Development in society is more than improving the physical conditions of human beings and economic growth. It is a multidimensional approach to help human beings live full and meaningful lives. Hence, there is a shift in the definition of development from the main focus on economic growth, infrastructure and material gain, to human development and life transformation. A contemporary definition of development is the transformation of social, political, economic, ecological, and cultural structures that influence human relationships at interpersonal, societal, and international level for the benefit of the poor, the marginalised, and the oppressed (Bowers-Du Toit 2010:263; Haddad 2015:25). Speckman (2007:42) mentions that, in Africa, development means getting to the root of something, drawing out the real person with an understanding of *ubuntu* that stresses values, relationships, and communality in life. From a biblical perspective, Moffit (1987:236) defines development as an activity of the church that empowers human beings towards complete reconciliation with God, their fellow human beings, and their environment. In the light of the above, development has shifted from the main focus on economic growth, infrastructure, and material gain to human development, life, and social structure transformation. Moreover, Haynes (2008:13) emphasises that development has even extended to the spiritual realm; this involves enhancing the relationship with God. Hence, development must occur for the purpose of the kingdom, to demonstrate God's plans for the future, win people for the kingdom, and help people grow into God's purpose (Moffit 1987:235).

## 2.1 Mission and development

Development is part of the mission of the local church (Dronen 2013:177, 181). This happens when development is linked to mission and used to enable humanity to live life in fullness and confront social injustices. Mission of the church is a response to mission of God (Si 2008:95). According to Bosch (2000:368-498), mission is comprehensive; it includes, among others, evangelisation, the quest for justice, action in hope, and liberation. Hence, Si (2008:92, 101) says mission for justice must be practised in love and should contribute to liberation and freedom. Bosch (2000:427) and Khauoe (2011) summarise the practice of mission as the proclamation of the gospel and responsible involvement in society. The proclamation of the gospel must transform the inner person and enable him/her to do the will of God in his/her own concrete context, whereas social involvement should be for the purpose of transforming unjust social structures, attitudes, and policies that perpetuate injustices (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:10, 26; Si 2008:92; Dronen 2013:181). Therefore, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of

God and social involvement are not two separate mandates; they are intrinsically linked.

However, for a long time, the church viewed the two mandates as separate and emphasised one mandate more than the other, resulting in the church being accused of lacking transformative intervention in society, which is displayed in the poor vision of mission and service to the world, and the manifestation of a broken relationship with God (Speckman 2007:xxvi). Consequently, humanity, especially in Africa, but also in other parts of the world, ignored the injustices perpetuated by the social structures in their midst. To change the situation, mission must practice reflective engagement with the world by doing intense social analysis of the context, reading the signs of times, and deconstructing modern notions of development linked with economic growth (Hendriks 2010:277; Si 2008:92; Wijzen 2011:280). Again, leadership is needed that can implement the necessary change that will transform ordinary experiences of life, create new attitudes, challenge old values, and direct people towards a transforming relationship with God (Doohan 1984:50).

## 2.2 Diaconia and development

Mission and diaconia constitute the essence of the church (Knoetze 2009:52). Diaconia and development are intrinsically linked and both can contribute to human empowerment and confronting social injustices. According to Heitink (1999:293), diaconia is a service of the church to God through the service to fellow human beings (Lk. 22:26-27; Jn. 12:2) to enable all the potential charismata for the well-being of all (1 Cor. 12:5-7). Not only the minister or the deacon, but also the entire church is responsible for implementing this service of the church. Heitink (1999:299) further argues that diaconal ministry engages various spheres in society. Socially, it must promote equal treatment of the minority and the marginalised, such as foreigners, women, homosexuals, and the aged. Politically, it must mobilise towards moral and responsible actions in society. The church must not be afraid to challenge the government's decisions if they promote injustices or be reluctant to praise the government where it does well. Economically, it must engage the issue of workers' rights, unemployment, the aging population, dependency on grants, and redistribution of the country's wealth. Environmentally, it must address issues, such as climate change, littering, deforestation, and others, as these have become the main concerns across various spheres of society.

In addition, Heitink (1999:306) states that diaconia can be performed on various levels such as that of the local congregation whereby ordained ministry, the laity, the elders, and the deacons can be equipped and given

the opportunity to serve the local community. On this point, Heitink warns that the diaconate in the local church must cease to increasingly making members of the church the object of diaconal ministry. Rather, members of the church should be the subject of the diaconate ministry. The attention and care of the church must primarily be directed to those within its reach in society. On the level of society, the church must address the needs of society in terms of health, education, crime, and politics. Globally, diaconia can contribute a great deal to issues, such as the economy, climate change, conflict, and global peace. In summary, development is a broad, comprehensive, and deep concept. Guided by the values of the gospel, mission and diaconia contribute to the development of society in a unique way. In the context of the church, development is now referred to in various terms, such as integrated mission and missional diaconia, whereas others prefer to use the term diaconia to refer to community development activities and projects. The latter is the approach used by the DRCA OFS.

### 3. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON DIACONIA IN THE DRCA OFS

The DRCA OFS (2003:140) regard diaconia as a priestly service to those in need of care, comfort, empowerment, and justice, in order to maintain unity and to witness to all who are in darkness. According to the DRCA OFS (1987:103-105), doing diaconal ministry is not only about being compassionate to one's neighbour, but it is also an intentional action (Ja. 2:15-17) and direct service to God, guided by love, prayer, the presence of Christ, and self-sacrifice. It is a service that endeavours to address a human need in his/her relationship with God. In diaconal ministry, intentional action can be demonstrated through motivation, confronting injustices, concrete help with material need, and development of the other, so that there is true interaction of faith between the one in need and God. The foundation of diaconal ministry lies in God (Ps. 146:7) and is guided by his love. Every Christian and local congregation have a divine responsibility to participate in diaconal service (Ex. 22:21-24; Lev. 19:9; Dt. 14:28-29; Lk. 6:36).

The ultimate purpose of diaconal service is to honour God (Mt. 5:16), to show gratitude, to spread the presence of the Kingdom of God, and to follow the example of Christ (Jn. 10:16). It is thus imperative that the motive of the diaconal service should be the divine mandate, not political influence. According to the DRCA OFS (1987:105), deacons are tasked with leading the diaconal ministry in the DRCA, in general. They must, however, be empowered by ministers, so that the diaconal ministry can

be practised appropriately, according to the word of God. The deacons themselves are not expected to do diaconial ministry alone; they must, however, empower others, set an example, and mobilise others towards doing diaconial service to both members and non-members in society.

#### **4. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF THE DIACONIAL SERVICE IN THE DRCA OFS**

The DRCA, in general, is a mission product of the DRC. During South Africa's apartheid era, the DRC for the white Afrikaners had a far-reaching charitable programme for black communities throughout the country (Baur 2009:278). In the Free State, the DRC contributed financial and human resources to the diaconial ministry of the DRCA OFS, especially in Qwaqwa, Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, and Bloemfontein (Cronjé 1982:65, 66; Odendaal 1956:64, 65). In Qwaqwa, and in addition to projects for the poor, the Elizabeth Ross Hospital and the Thiboloha School for the Disabled were also established (DRCA OFS 1975:28). In Thaba Nchu, several projects were undertaken, such as the Strydom Education College for the training of teachers and ministers; the Barend van Rensburg orphanage housing children with various physical and social challenges; and the Boiketlong house for the aged that provided care, life skills, and a proper burial. Other social developments include the Bartimea School for the deaf and the blind, and the youth centre for youth empowerment. In Botshabelo, a multifunction centre was established on 25 June 1994 offering the following services (DRCA OFS 2007:114; 2011:132): care of the elderly, including visiting the aged at their homes and helping them with medical care, food, and cleaning; services to family and children, involving counselling in terms of marriage and abuse, empowerment about child rearing through crèches, and life skills, especially for women; the girl and boy child project that addresses the needs and challenges of youths in society and in schools; and the home-based care project that focuses on those who are terminally ill with AIDS, cancer, and other diseases and helping with food and administering medical treatment. In Bloemfontein, there was a bookshop for selling church, religious, and administration books, a press shop, head office buildings, and the Lefika training and development centre, established on 12 June 2010 to train and empower people with matriculation at a low cost (DRCA OFS 2011:133).

The DRCA OFS Church Order (2003:Article 47) advises that each congregation is compelled to do diaconial ministry locally and to extend it to other levels. This can be done in partnership with other churches such as the Dutch Reformed family of churches (DRCA OFS 2011:57).

The DRCA OFS does its diaconial ministry with the external assistance of non-religious sectors like *Die Volksblad*, Lotto, and the government. The DRC in the Free State contributes mostly financial and human resources (DRCA OFS 1995:97; 1999:92; 2007:114, 116). On synod level, in particular, the DRCA OFS provides all the opportunities available to help congregations be effective in their diaconial ministry, for example, training in poverty alleviation, home-based care, AIDS and other social challenges (DRCA OFS 2007:113; 2011:134, 164). However, the DRC in the Free State and the DRCA OFS synods are increasingly concerned about congregations and ministers who lack commitment in diaconial service (DRCA OFS 1999:89). For example, diaconial development projects are declining, due to failure to take note of the world (DRCA OFS 1987:109), and most of the congregations do not submit reports on diaconial ministry (DRCA OFS 1999:89; 2011:21).

## 5. DRCA OFS AND ITS CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY

The theology of the DRCA does not mainly use the concept “development”, but it prefers using concepts such as “mission” and “diaconial ministry” to indicate its particular involvement in society. The DRCA OFS synod (2011:55) advised that diaconial ministry and mission/witness should not be separated from each other. However, in practical terms, mission and diaconial ministry are separate entities in the DRCA OFS. In terms of leadership for mission and diaconia, mission is the responsibility of the elders and the minister, whereas diaconial ministry is the responsibility of the deacons. However, the elders, the minister, and the deacons are expected to empower the laity in their responsibility towards both mission and diaconial ministry. The DRCA OFS (2003:139) understands mission as the proclamation of the gospel in word and deeds to those living in darkness, so that they come to the wonderful light of Christ. This mandate is for all Christians and local congregations and, if possible, it can be done jointly with the DR family of churches.

According to the survey done by Pali (2016:292), the contemporary practice of mission in the DRCA OFS is narrow, as it focuses on evangelisation with less concrete action. Mission is viewed as one of the projects of a congregation, not the being or identity of the congregation. To demonstrate, some of the congregations in the DRCA OFS believe that mission is the responsibility of the DRCs for whites. Consequently, most of the congregations are reluctant to participate in the mission in foreign countries (Lesotho, among others) and locally (Pali & Verster 2013:248). In

most of the congregations of the DRCA OFS, preaching and evangelisation are the only activities that motivate members for mission. Regrettably, most of the congregations do not submit their annual reports on mission (DRCA OFS 2011:113; Pali & Verster 2013:245).

In the past, the DRCA OFS was extensively involved in mission within Lesotho, and in industrial areas, farms, and mining areas in South Africa (Cronjé 1982:65, 66; Odendaal 1956:64, 65). The DRC in the FS formed a partnership with the DRCA OFS and was the main sponsor of the missional activities of the DRCA OFS (DRCA OFS 2007:111). This success in mission was influenced by the leadership of the white missionaries who were eager and passionate about mission. However, one should also not ignore the role played by the ministers, the evangelists, and the ordinary members in the practice of mission of the DRCA OFS, even though white missionaries were often the tutors. In the light of the above, one can conclude that the DRCA OFS' view of mission is narrow and tends to focus on one aspect of mission, namely evangelisation, at the expense of concrete social involvement.

In the DRCA OFS, the diaconal ministry carries out societal projects for the alleviation of poverty or for engaging in social challenges. The historical development of the DRCA OFS indicates that white missionaries from the DRC contributed considerably towards the community development projects of the DRCA OFS, especially in Qwaqwa, Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, and Bloemfontein (DRCA OFS 1995:97, 98; 1999:88, 89; 2007:115). However, a contemporary report indicates that most of the projects done in Thaba Nchu and Qwaqwa are declining and are being taken over by the government. The community projects in Botshabelo and Bloemfontein are also declining, due to a lack of support from the congregations in the DRCA OFS, limited financial support from the DRC, and lack of human resources to lead the projects.

The survey of Pali (2016:82, 83, 95) indicates that the majority of the DRCA OFS congregations are not involved in community projects, despite the consistent appeal by the synod and the DRC to use their support and help. Furthermore, the dominant community projects consist mainly providing food and pastoral counselling, whereas the social challenges are poverty and HIV/AIDS. Regrettably, most of the congregations mention that they do not have a strategy to counteract the scourge of poverty and the pandemic of HIV/AIDS.

## 6. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DRCA OFS' DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Korten's theory addresses four historical phases of NGO development activity or four possible schemes of development approaches by NGOs in society. Swart (2006) adapted Korten's theory as strategic approaches to community development by congregations.

### 6.1 Relief and welfare approach (Generation 1)

According to Korten (1990:115, 116), Generation 1 involves providing relief and welfare services, such as food, health care, and shelter, in order to address the immediate and visible needs of the suffering people. The motive for these kinds of services is to respond to an urgent situation where there is a need for, or a shortage of immediate humanitarian action. The beneficiaries could be individuals or families in a dire or disaster situation; the chief volunteer may be the NGO and churches that play a role in implementing the services of relief and welfare. To effectively achieve the required services using this approach, one must be skilled in logistics management. Lastly, in order to draw the attention of the donors and the public, images and urgent conditions of the poor, orphaned, and starving people are used to catch the heart of those who are kind enough to donate.

In the DRCA OFS, the welfare service of giving food and clothing is the chief method of assistance provided to those in need. The beneficiaries are individuals and families; the volunteers are members of the congregation or pastors. Motivational speeches, preaching, and invitations motivate members to participate. According to Swart (2006:98), the disadvantage of this approach is that it promotes passivity on the part of the beneficiaries, and a paternalistic attitude on the part of the benefactors. Short-term relief is offered with no prospect for the sustainable development of the beneficiaries. Passivity and dependency on the DRCA OFS and its historical paternalistic relations with the DRC are recurring challenges of the DRCA OFS (Pali 2017:3).

### 6.2 Community development (Generation 2)

Korten (1990:118, 119, 120) calls this approach a community development strategy whereby the local community (women, youths, churches, and schools) is provided with skills to enhance its self-reliant actions so that whatever benefits it may have may be sustained by the beneficiaries themselves in the absence of the NGO or donor. This approach assumes that the local community has the potential for self-advancement; however, tradition and lack of education or resources prevent them from doing so (Swart 2006:100).

External intervention is used to facilitate change, thus helping the community realise its potential through education and skills development.

The DRCA OFS provides various training opportunities to ministers to empower them with skills that can be taught to members of the congregations. Furthermore, the community projects in Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, and Bloemfontein endeavour to offer some skills to empower members of the local communities to develop self-reliant skills. A lack of human resources and finances hampers the DRCA OFS' efforts to empower local communities. Hence, one can conclude that, due to the declining diaconal services in the congregations of the DRCA OFS, the impact of development is minimal in the local communities. In addition, Swart (2006:100) argues that the scope of impact of this community development is restricted to the local area; hence, this will not influence the national or international policymakers and institutional designers.

### **6.3 Sustainable systems development (Generation 3)**

According to Swart (2006:101, 102), the focus is to facilitate a change of dysfunctional policies and institutions on all levels of society for the benefit of those affected on a wider scale. According to Korten (1990:120), this change in policies and institutions is necessary to support development and to avoid delays due to a lack of supportive institutional structures and policies. NGOs and congregations, in collaboration with the power holders in the various structures of society and government, are responsible for facilitating the change in policies and institutions, in order to mobilise support that makes systems more responsive to the needs of the people. In brief, the NGOs and the congregations play the role of facilitators to bring about change in policies and institutions.

In the DRCA OFS, ministers and members involved in the projects in Qwaqwa, Thaba Nchu, and Botshabelo have the opportunity to interact with the government and policymakers, in order to influence change in the policies and institutions for the betterment and benefit of the poor, sick, and vulnerable. However, most of these projects fail, due to a lack of strategic leadership.

### **6.4 People movement development (Generation 4)**

Korten's (1990:124, 125) theory involves people driving social change with regard to the environment, human rights for the vulnerable, peace, and population. It is about people who pursue the transformation of society through values and the vision in which they believe. They seek to conscientise and mobilise public consciousness with regard to a people-centred vision. The real challenge that inspires this strategic approach is

a lack of adequately mobilising a vision as the root cause of the failure of development on local, regional, national, and global levels of society. The public must, therefore, be imbued with an adequate, alternative vision in order to mobilise voluntary actions on both national and global level. To do this, a myriad of networks of people and organisations need to co-operate in order to challenge the structures and policies that hamper human development. The subjects of this people movement development are the networks of people, churches, and organisations that function as activists and educators, by coalescing and energising self-managing networks through using mass media, newsletters, recorded media, and social networks. The space available for public communication is used to mobilise the community towards social change.

The practice of people movement development in the DRCA OFS was more obvious through the Confessing Circle during South Africa's apartheid era. According to Kritzing (2013:4, 5), the Confessing Circle was a ministerial fraternity established in 1974. Its values and vision strove to unite the DRCA, DRMC and RCA in a commitment to unity, reconciliation, and justice. Its key aims included, among others, to implement the prophetic task against the oppressive structures of apartheid and the priestly service to both the victims and the oppressors of the apartheid system, as well as to liberate humanity from unrighteousness, dehumanisation, and lovelessness in the church. The Confessing Circle had a network of international institutions that funded projects, training, and education of the ministers in the Confessing Circle. These ministers operated as activists to mobilise their congregations and used every assembly of the DRCA during apartheid to denounce apartheid and to support social change in South Africa.

People movement development rarely occurs in the contemporary development projects of the DRCA OFS. The projects in Qwaqwa, Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, and Bloemfontein are supposed to have developed towards people movement development, but the majority of these projects are declining and closing down, whereas others are taken over by the government. The DRCA OFS is now acting in an observational or advisory role in some projects taken over by the government. This is due to a lack of commitment, knowledge, human resources, and internal conflicts in the DRCA OFS, which paralysed its ministry. In summary, the majority of the projects of the DRCA OFS are welfare and relief work. However, an historical analysis of the projects in Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, Qwaqwa, and Bloemfontein indicate that they contribute to local community empowerment. The regular interaction with the state and global organisations for funding or improving services offered by the

church create the potential to influence policies and some governmental institutions. Regrettably, a regular concern of the DRCA OFS and DRC is a lack of commitment, and funds may hamper further influence and development to the other level.

## 7. INVOLVEMENT OF THE DRCA OFS MINISTERS IN SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

This section discusses the ministers in the DRCA congregations' involvement in society with regard to their members, non-members, and general matters pertaining to society. The church order of the DRCA OFS (2003:Article 7) requires ministers to do regular house visits to members of their congregations and to non-members. The house visits may be done by the minister alone or accompanied by an elder. However, not only the minister, but also the elders and members of the congregations are expected to do house visits for the sake of comforting, building, and motivating people. The ministers of the DRCA OFS are involved in society through projects as part of diaconal ministry and through evangelisation as part of mission.

According to the qualitative research of Pali (2016:107)<sup>4</sup>, the involvement of the DRCA OFS ministers in social ministry targets firstly, the members of the congregations and then the non-members in society, with hardly any global impact. This means that house visits and projects done deliberately benefit firstly, the members and then the non-members if there is a need. This could be due to the historical influences of the congregational ministerial practice that indicate that most of the time congregations focus their societal ministry on their own members with hardly any global impact (Campbell 2000:80).

Ministers in the DRCA OFS use a spiritual approach, whereas congregational members use a practical approach to most of the societal challenges (Pali 2016:106). Often, in terms of the DRCA OFS, ministers usually do house visits for counselling, comforting, and motivating the members at funerals, weddings, and ward meetings. By contrast, members usually address practical aspects, such as caring, sharing in pain and resources, and engaging directly in issues of societal concern such as crime and HIV, among others.

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4 Pali's (2016) document contains empirical research done within congregations of the DRCA OFS. Again, it is a joint PhD submitted to UFS, Bloemfontein and VU, Amsterdam and the title is "Leadership and transformation in the African church: A practical theological study of one denomination."

In terms of social involvement, the ministers in the DRCA OFS are reported to be too busy. This affects their participation in social engagement and empowerment of members of the congregation (Pali 2016:107). This challenge of being too busy is due to a shortage of ministers and the growing numbers of the congregations.<sup>5</sup> In 2011, there was a total of sixty-five ministers in the DRCA OFS, but in 2015, there were only forty members left, due to death, transfer to other synods, and retirement (DRCA OFS 2015:48).

In the congregations of the DRCA OFS, lay empowerment mostly involves matters concerning the internal ministry of the congregation (Pali 2016:108). Despite the poor empowerment of the laity, they are more directly involved in social engagement than the ministers.

## 8. IMPEDIMENTS TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT BY THE DRCA OFS

Cochrane *et al.* (1991:27) argue that ministry is influenced by our social context in as much as it can be governed by the demands of the gospel, and the ecclesial authority. This means that the social context often influences the church towards a certain direction of ministry that may be beneficial or disadvantageous. Throughout history, the main impediment to development in Africa was the collaboration between the capitalist, the colonialist, and the missionary (Kane 1978:248). During the colonial and apartheid eras, the capitalist was known to own large businesses and have power to influence the economic policies of governments, who had to ensure the economic oppression of Africans, especially through forced labour in the mining and agricultural sectors. Leeson and Minogue (1988:171, 172) argue that the influence of the capitalists prompted the colonists to expropriate land from Africans and to use a conquered labour to control the indigenous populations, in order to ensure economic growth for their own benefit. Furthermore, to protect the labour system, Africans were denied access to the land and forced to pay taxes. This practice forced Africans to migrate to the mines and plantations, in order to find cash to pay for the taxes. To further sustain this forced labour system, the colonial and apartheid governments enacted laws to encourage forced labour and curtail the educational development of Africans, the majority of whom were prepared for labour. The missionary used the biblical teachings, in this instance, to inculcate work ethics in Africans.

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5 About the implication of this growth in the DRCA OFS, see Pali (2017:2)

The impact of the above on the DRCA, in general, was that its members were part of those recruited for forced labour in South Africa, and denied opportunities to proceed further with their careers. This led to material poverty and a lack of skills for many of the members of the DRCA. Hence, throughout history, the majority of the DRCA members were unable to fund their community development projects and pay a decent salary to their ministers. In addition, collaboration of the DRCA ministers and missionaries with the industrial, mining, and agricultural sectors created the suspicion that Africans are made to yield to tyrant employers and to ignore injustices in the workplace.

In the present era, capitalist influence is manifested in the macro-economic policies that promise thriving economic growth, and improved infrastructure and quality of life. Instead of development, however, we cause a depletion and drainage of human and mineral resources, due to uncontrolled economic growth, abject poverty, and a high unemployment rate, leading to debilitating human conditions, because the needs of the local context are overlooked. According to Speckman (2007:xii, 13, 15, 219), macro-economic policies are blamed for many aspects, such as increasing corruption and poverty, and diminishing institutional capacity due to the strict demands in obeying the stipulations of the external donor. Another consequence is the lack of initiative in economic and self-empowerment aspects, causing its recipients to be dependents who lack initiative, have low self-esteem, and are non-productive.

In the light of the above, Ellis (1988:48) states that members of the congregations are vulnerable to both the changes in the context and the social characteristics, values, and interests they bring to the congregation from society. As part of the South African society, DRCA members are also affected by dependency and lack of initiatives, due to the adverse consequences of macro-economic policies. For example, the DRCA OFS is heavily dependent on the DRC in the Free State to fund its mission and the diaconial activities and salaries of most of its ministers. This dependency is even extended to lack of initiatives in some theological and ministerial issues (Kritzinger 2011:118).

It is true that the new democratic South Africa inherited good infrastructure as well as agricultural and medical development from the colonial and apartheid eras, to the benefit of many in society. It must also be noted that, throughout history, South Africa suffered three oppressive onslaughts, namely slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. These all amount to white imperialism in different forms. The colonial and apartheid governments were responsible for external ordering through legislation and domination, with psychological and cultural consequences

(Saayman 1991:24). Evidence of this in apartheid South Africa was the Group Areas Act and the Land Act, whereby black people were classified as third-class citizens and denied ownership of land in South Africa. The apartheid laws benefitted the white community economically, because the economically viable careers were reserved for whites and only whites were allowed to buy and own land in the urban areas. The consequence of this for the DRCA OFS was that its members were predominantly black and viewed as third-class citizens that were not allowed to own land within the urban boundaries of South Africa. Hence, the title deeds of many of the buildings of the DRCA OFS have been, and some of them still are, in the hands of the DRCA FS.

During the colonial and apartheid eras, the missionary was responsible for cultural oppression, by colonising the mind and changing the Africans' entire system of belief and practice (Saayman 1991:24). The vast majority of the white missionaries used Christian religion to influence both the thinking and the belief system of Africans (Van der Walt 2003:24). The missionaries contributed to many positive developments in Africa. Through a comprehensive mission approach, missionaries contributed to the societal development in education, agriculture, medicine, and others (Kane 1978:308, 320, 329). However, some missionaries contributed to disempowering the Africans, using their narrow theology and collaborating with the Western colonialists. Van der Walt (2006:34-35) mentions that extreme theologies, such as escapism, dualism, pietism, and ecclesiasticism obtained from Western missionaries are irrelevant to Africa, because they promote a lack of effective social involvement by either emphasising division between gospel and context, or ignoring the context, with too much focus on personal piety and internal matters of the congregation. In addition, in the early missionary era in South Africa, the collaboration of the colonists and the missionaries contributed to the economic and political deprivation of Africans. For example, in their desperation to have Africans converted, missionaries collaborated with the colonial government to usurp the political independence and destroy the subsistence economic development of Africans. Poverty and a lack of political leadership led destitute Africans to the missionaries to seek help. That opportunity would then be used to convert Africans to the Christian religion (Christensen & Hutchison 1982:193, 195).

In the context of the DRCA, missionaries from the DRCA made a considerable contribution to the development of the DRCA. These missionaries sacrificed much energy, time, and money to lay a foundation for the mission, diaconial ministry, building of churches, and the training of black ministers. On the other hand, some of these missionaries were

reluctant to let go of their leadership and mentor blacks. They erred in being too ready to do things for the DRCA; hence, the majority of the DRCA members expect the DRC to always fund the building, mission, and salaries of their ministers.

Speckman (2007:xxiii) blames the other root causes of the underdevelopment of African societies on internal and external factors. The external factors were discussed earlier in the form of Western colonial powers and macro-economic policies. Internal factors refer to the internal challenges faced by leadership in its internal ministry. In relation to the church, Baur (2009:29) argues that challenges faced by the early church in Africa were the failure to evangelise and indigenise, and the loss of leadership. Adeyemo (1995:12, 13) discusses the internal challenges of the church in Africa as a lack of sound biblical teaching, inadequate theological expression, and a shortage of trained leaders. In general, especially in the mainline churches, the internal challenges of the churches are over-functioning leaders, leadership burnout, unmotivated laity, and maintaining focus (Stevens & Collins 1993:xii).

The DRCA OFS' internal challenges impede its development and participation in the development of the South African society. Firstly, the conflict among those in leadership has caused tension in the relationship and concern about the integrity of the DRCA OFS (2015:32, 33).

Secondly, there is a shortage of ministers who are burdened with overwhelming ministerial duties, causing some ministers to be exhausted and depressed.

Thirdly, the interaction of the minister and the lay leaders or members of the congregation is not up to standard. Recently, Pali (2016:48) indicated that some ministers view their congregation members and lay leaders as passive, ignorant, rebellious, and incapable of doing ministry in the church. By contrast, some lay leaders and members of the congregation view their minister as incapable of doing ministry and not being exemplary. This results in a lack of interest in participating in the workshops for empowerment towards mission and diaconal ministry.

Fourthly, the declining mission and diaconal ministry, due to a lack of commitment and funding ministry (Pali 2016:108). Funding and support of mission and diaconal ministry is deficient. On several occasions, the general synod and the DRCA OFS synods have complained about a lack of co-operation, creativity, and skill in doing mission and diaconal ministry. In the light of these impediments to development, what kind of development is needed for Africa and for South Africa, in particular?

## 9. TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT

Swart (2006:245) mentions that, in the context of Africa, there is a need for development in economic growth, self-reliance, and social justice. Bowers-Du Toit (2010:263) states that development is needed in order to transform social, political, and economic structures, as well as relationships at interpersonal, societal, and international level. Van der Walt (2003:446) argues that the development needed must fit in with the African culture and the local context. Speckman (2007:xiv, xxiv) relates that it must be people-centred development that will help Africans remove their crutches, enabling them to use their internal God-given resources to take themselves out of the dire past and bring about an overhaul of social structures. Furthermore, this kind of development must be prioritised over other developments for Africa. According to Kortzen, people-centred development is an ideal development for many situations, because it takes note of the human consciousness and particularity of each context. According to Speckman (2007:24), people-centred development provides legs and independence, not crutches or dependency.

Haynes (2008:12, 13) refers to people-centred development as human development that puts humanity rather than material gain at the centre of development. People are viewed as the real wealth of the nation and the vital resource for development. It helps reduce the differentiation between developed and developing countries, as both need human development. Lastly, human development is more than physical conditions; it includes political, economic, social, moral, and psychological aspects. Recently, even the spiritual aspect is accommodated as part of human development. Human development is comprehensive and multidimensional. Hence, neither the state nor the church can achieve human development in isolation. Human development is a continuous process that needs time and the commitment of all stakeholders in the process.

### 9.1 Benefits of biblically informed human development

The leadership in the congregations of the DRCA OFS need to shift towards human development. To help the DRCA OFS achieve sustainable human development, it is necessary to establish an intimate relationship with the Triune God and to embed itself in the study of the scripture, in order to strengthen internal fellowship and mobilise members of the DRCA OFS towards an effective societal development in South Africa. This can happen when ministers of the DRCA OFS focus on enabling their members to use their God-given talents to empower themselves and transform their situation.

In the Christian context, maintaining the status quo of systems that perpetuate injustices is evil. Our engagement with situations of those vulnerable must bring about authentic transformation. Speckman (2007:183) says that in reading Acts 3-5, the benefits of biblically informed human development include the experience of a whole and complete restoration of humanity. One realises this when people start to pay attention to, and converse with, others. Development enables one to shift from being dependent to being independent. Rising on his feet, the disabled man was able to move around and progress in life. Authentic development empowers one to be bold to challenge social injustices. When the apostles were prosecuted for proclaiming the name of Christ, the healed disabled man was one of the people in the crowd praying and supporting the apostles against the injustices of the officials of the Roman Empire.

## 10. CONCLUSION

In response to the research question: To what extent are the ministers in the DRCA OFS involved in societal ministry?, one can respond by stating that, according to Heitink (1999), diaconial ministry has to engage social issues, such as equality of both the minority and the vulnerable groups, such as foreigners, homosexuals, women, children, the sick, and the aged. In its diaconial ministry in various places, the DRCA OFS endeavours to help some of the vulnerable groups. In Thaba Nchu, the orphanage, the home for the aged, and the Bartimea School for the deaf and blind cater for the vulnerable groups in society. Through its multipurpose centre, Botshabelo addresses the challenges of youths, especially young girls, uses home-based care workers to care for the sick, and skills development to empower unemployed women. Through its Lefika project in Bloemfontein, the DRCA OFS empowers youths to upgrade their matriculation. On the political level, the DRCA OFS, in the past and through its general synod, strongly condemned apartheid, but contemporary studies indicate that the DRCA OFS congregations now practise mute criticism against the present government. Economically, the DRCA OFS made efforts for economic empowerment through projects that can offer food and clothing to those in need. However, this practice hardly challenges the economic system that perpetuates unemployment. Environmentally, no visible projects have made members of the DRCA aware of the environment, except through synods and prayers with the congregations.

Heitink (1999) emphasises that diaconial ministry must relate with the local community about the congregations' impact on the societal level and even participate in global development. With regard to the DRCA OFS,

diaconal ministry, in the local context of the congregation, operates on the welfare level where immediate needs are addressed. However, diaconal ministry in Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo, and Bloemfontein has endeavoured to move to other levels such as influencing policy decision and sustainable community development. Due to a lack of financial support and human resources, diaconal ministry is declining in those areas.

An analysis of the role of the DRCA OFS ministers in the development of the South African society showed that they are too busy, due to the many congregations and a shortage of ministers. Hence, they have hardly any time to engage in societal development. However, societal development through mission and diaconal ministry prioritises members mostly and, if need be, non-members sometimes benefit. Lastly, societal development activities in the congregations of the DRCA OFS are mainly on local congregational level, with few reaching the societal level. There has not been a societal project on international level.

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