

# Integral Mission: An Overview of Four Models and Its Role in Development

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**Abstract:** Integral mission, also referred to as Christian, holistic or transformation mission/development, is a dynamic, multifaceted approach to evangelism and development. In the Christian context, integral mission is used to describe church's mission to meet people's needs in a multidimensional way. Integral mission proposes that man is a whole person with holistic needs and meeting either need without taking care of needs in others spheres does not cater for the whole person. Models of integral mission take various approaches including evangelism (spiritual well-being), demonstration (political, economic and psycho-social well-being only), evangelism and demonstration (spiritual, economic, psycho-social and political parallel), and evangelism and demonstration (combined or integrated). Integral mission is conceptualized, embedded and actualized through Micah's call and challenge. Micah's challenge is based on what the Lord requires of Christians who is to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. This article generates an overview of integral mission, four of its models and its role in development, and some of the challenges/shortcomings that come with implementation of each of the models. It can be concluded from the discussions and observations in this paper that integral mission, irrespective of the approach takes, is based on meeting man's physical, social, emotional, spiritual, economic and political needs.

**Keywords:** Demonstration, Development, Evangelism, Integral, Micah, Mission.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The term integral mission comes from Spanish words *integral mission*, which is used in Latin America to describe and also refer to it as holistic ministry, Christian or transformational development (De Gruchy, 2005). According to Ringma (2004), to integrate something means to bring things together in contributing to a greater whole. Integral mission is about God's activity through the church for the establishment of his kingdom and the total salvation of humanity as founded in the kingdom theology (Ringma, 2004). Padilla (2007) explains that integral mission is the way God intended to carry out his purpose of love and justice revealed in Jesus Christ, channeled through the church and displayed in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Christian context, integral mission is used to describe church's mission to meet people's needs in a multidimensional way.

The purpose of integral mission is to inculcate the values of the Kingdom of God through witness of the love and the justice revealed in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Spirit aimed at transforming human life in a multi-dimensional way at both individual and community levels (Padilla, 2007). For integral mission to be authentic and credible and to fulfil its original character, it has to be multidimensional (Bosch, 1991).

The practice of integral mission goes back to Jesus himself and to the first century but it came to be acknowledged and mainstreamed about twenty years ago. De Gruchy (2005) posits that integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel, with resultant social consequences. As observed by Ringma (2004),

holistic mission involves joining with people with whom one seeks to serve, visioning, team building, empowerment, and the development of various programs and interventions as part of social concern, community development, building the community of faith, and the work of structural transformation. Disconnected development occurs when the concerns and needs of community residents are compartmentalized and “treated” without regard to other aspects of their lives (Wallace et al., 2004).

Integral mission is embedded in the Micah’s challenge (call) as fronted by evangelicals, whose main mandate is to promote justice, be kind and passionately walk with the poor in order to attain holistic transformation. Micah’s Challenge is a global Christian campaign to end extreme poverty, with its proponents being inspired by scripture, guided by the Holy Spirit and through prayer, they advocate for a more just world (Bowser & Longfield, 2014).

## II. BACKGROUND

Integral (holistic) mission has a historical background dating from the days of Jesus Christ. However, a major paradigm shift started emerging in the late 60s and got grounded in the 70s and 80s. According to Padilla (2005), the 1966 Berlin meeting resolved that through the church’s proclamation of the Gospel and conversion of people to Christ, there would be a resultant impact on the social, moral, and psychological needs of mankind. At Lausanne in 1974, evangelicals underscored the social implications of the gospel and the mission of the Church thus strengthening the momentum for integral mission as an approach to holistic development. Meetings in Willow bank (1978) and Consultation on World Evangelization held at Pattaya (1980) made significant steps towards debating and mainstreaming integral mission. The Wheaton Declaration of 1983 statement dubbed ‘Church in Response to Human Need’ is what led to the mainstreaming of and need to embrace integral mission by admitting that world challenges such as racism, war, population explosion, poverty, family disintegration, social revolution, and communism could be addressed through interventions based on scriptural frameworks and principles. This was to be achieved through urging all evangelicals to openly, firmly support and advocate for racial equality, human freedom, and all forms of social justice throughout the world and to all mankind.

Integral mission is conceptualized and embedded on Micah’s Challenge, based on Micah 6:8 which reiterate that the Lord requires Christians to do justice, love kindness and mercy, and walk in humility with God. Micah’s challenge mandate is advanced by Micah’s Network which was formed in 1999, made up of 276 Christian relief, development and justice organizations from 74 countries. The aim of Micah’s Network is to strengthen the capacity of participating agencies to respond within a biblical framework to the needs of the poor and oppressed, to speak strongly and effectively regarding the nature of the mission of the Church to proclaim and to demonstrate the love of Christ to a needy world and to influence leaders and decision-makers to maintain and promote the rights of the poor and oppressed, and rescue the weak and needy from vagaries of despondency and destitution (Padilla, 2005).

Integral mission considers man as the starting point (unit) of development in the effort of developing societies, communities and countries. It considers the development of a whole person’s needs i.e. spiritual (proclamation), economic, political and social (demonstration) in totality, which should ideally translate and correlate to growth and transformation of the wider society. The ultimate goal of integral mission (transformational development) is authentic development and transformation through social involvement, which is part of God’s characteristic and plans for humanity as demonstrated by Jesus’ life as described in Luke 2:52 where He grew in stature and wisdom meaning that Jesus grew in body, soul and mind.

As observed by Ringma (2004), integral mission is embedded in the concern for the whole person, prophetic ministry that joins worship of God and the work of justice for the needy, and reflection of the ministry of Jesus which entailed proclamation of the gospel and healing of the sick. Further, Ringma (ibid) observes that integral mission ensures that programs focus on the whole community with the aim of meeting the spiritual and physical needs of the person and that participation between aid agencies and the local community is a crucial building block of this approach to development. This can be displayed through cooperation between the churches and aid agencies, using wide range of different Christian activities to serve the community holistically as well as it mainstreaming Christian social transformation, and integrated development.

### III. FOUR MODELS OF INTEGRAL MISSION AND THEIR ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT

#### 3.1 FOUR MODELS OF INTEGRAL MISSION (DEVELOPMENT):

##### 3.1.1 *Evangelism (Spiritual Well Being):*

This is a model of integral mission that takes care of the spiritual needs of mankind. In this model, religion only satisfies the great commission of teaching the word to all the corners of the earth and hopes that by meeting spiritual needs, other material and physical needs will be met. According to this model, the Word of God is highly regarded in transformational development work (Umali, nd). Similarly, this model fits in well with the original purpose of missions which was to save souls and to plant churches, mainly in foreign countries, by means of the preaching of the gospel ( Padilla, 2007). This model seeks to understand and explain man's development in terms of spirituality. As Myers (2000:13) further argues, "... the causes of poverty are spiritual, and the role of the church in transformational development as one: to be a servant and a source of encouragement, not as a commander or judge".

Evangelism (spiritual well-being) model is based on the premise that man is spiritual and other earthly endeavors are not important to the kingdom of God. In this model, vision of the church's calling in the world, true ministry is reduced to evangelism, and everything else is regarded as secondary or unimportant (Ringma, 2004). Further, the model sees faith-based development versus other forms of development in the belief that changing a life or a community is ultimately a spiritual issue (Wallace et al., 2004). The model exemplifies the concept of seeking the kingdom of God first and all other things shall fall in place.

This model is mainly practiced and advocated for by churches and ministries which see their mandate for humanity as purely evangelistic. They do not see themselves in the demonstration realm. This model develops man and society spiritually only. This model tends to view man in terms of spirituality and not the body and mind as a whole and disregards the fact that holistic development should cater for body, soul and mind. The challenge with this model is that it ignores the fact that man has physical and material needs as well, which should be integrated with the spiritual needs.

##### 3.1.2 *Demonstration (Political, Economic and Psycho-Social Well Being Only):*

This is a model that only seeks to cater for the needs of the society materially including economically, in health, education, agriculture and investment but does not cater for the spiritual needs. According to Myers (2000), this model overemphasizes the fact that a Christian is commanded to demonstrate his/her faith in good works at the expense of spirituality.

This model sees development in the economic, psycho-social and political (body and mind) lenses without catering for the spiritual (spirit). In this model, when man has good health, food security, education, water and sanitation, his development needs are met and he is considered to be complete. This model sees man's poverty and lack of development as purely physical needs, disjointed from spiritual. The challenge with this model is that it concentrates on the physical and material wellbeing, isolating spiritual aspects and does not consider man as a whole made of soul, body and mind, and material development alone cannot be holistic.

##### 3.1.3. *Evangelism and Demonstration (Spiritual, Economic, Psycho-Social and Political Parallel):*

Evangelism and demonstration is a model of integral mission that sees integral development as one in which proclamation and demonstration play their roles independently yet both their efforts are aimed at one entity-mankind. According to Padilla (2007), this model views the whole world as a mission field where every human need is an opportunity for missionary service. In this model, the local church is called to demonstrate the reality of the Kingdom of God in the world, not only by what it says, but also by what it is and by what it does to respond to the human needs in every aspect. According to Belshaw et al., (2001), spiritual and material progresses do not always go hand in hand and instead operate parallel to each other. This model's school of thought is based on the fact that the main reason for the church involvement in development is contained in Jesus' declaration of mission on earth which was to bring good news to the poor. Good news here refers to proclamation and not demonstration.

This model views development as one that caters for the holistic needs of man through parallel paradigms and that the apparent linkage between religion and development attracts criticism (Khan & Bashar, 2008). The people who front this model's ideology see religion and development as two incompatible entities, but who target mankind with various incompatible interventions. This model tends to treat the body, soul and mind as separate entities and de-links the body,

soul and mind by compartmentalizing man yet he is one whole being. The challenge of this model is that when development initiatives occur in a piecemeal and compartmentalized fashion without a clear plan, without a long-term guiding mission, and without regard to the desires of the community, the result is disjointed development (Wallace et al., 2004).

### ***3.1.4 Evangelism and Demonstration (Combined or Integrated):***

Transformation theology emphasizes both evangelism and demonstration as distinct but equally important. This entails carrying out programs that focus on the whole community (Ringma, 2004). This model could be considered to be the most ideal model as far as integral mission (development) is concerned. It is a combination of both proclamation and demonstration. This model is based on the principle that faith must translate to works. In this model, evangelism and demonstration work in synergy to implement inclusive development initiatives. In this model, social action and evangelism go hand in hand (Umali, nd). In this model, the Church is committed to addressing poverty and human neglect. As Belshaw et al., (2001) argue, the role of the church goes beyond the material welfare of its members, and beyond the temporal concerns altogether. Instead, religion plays a major role in economic development. As Myers (2000 : xviii) argues, “the poor and the non-poor need God’s redemptive help to recover their true identity as children of God and in God’s image and their true vocation as productive stewards, given gifts by God to contribute to the well-being of all”. In this approach, the community recognizes that the churches’ role is not only to teach and preach the gospel, but also to be involved in transformational development’ (Umali, nd).

This model sees a major link between demonstration and proclamation. Proclamation compliments demonstration. Church (religion) caters for all types of needs i.e. spiritual, social, political and economic. In this model, churches must multiply and at the same time, they must cater for physical and material needs of mankind. This model employs a holistic and inclusive approach to development because it meets the needs of body, soul and mind.

This model creates a clear link and interdependence of the proclamation and demonstration. Religion and development are seemingly inseparable in this model (Khan & Bashar, 2008). This model of development is holistic since it takes care of the body, soul and mind. Belshaw et al., (2001) argue that a Christian is commanded to demonstrate his or her faith in good works. This means that without works, faith is not complete. McGauran (1972) argues that we must serve the whole man-his spirit as well as his body. Given that religion drives people’s behavior and actions in a more productive direction, it is not possible to separate religion from development (Khan & Bashar, 2008). Religion becomes the driver of the material and physical needs of the society, needs that compliment the spiritual needs. A challenge with this model is that though attaining a balanced development is the ideal, balancing proclamation and demonstration on a fifty-fifty pendulum is not an easy task. One usually lags behind. Also the implementers of this model might not be endowed with the skills to integrate the two to one, which occasionally leads to conflicts in mission work.

### **3.2 INTEGRAL MISSION’S ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT:**

Integral mission has a role in human development as ordered by God and as manifested by Jesus Christ in His mission to humanity. According to Uzukwu (1996), the church is an assembly which is subject by right, with competences deriving from the very origin of nature, the starting point for assuming the inherent mandate of transforming the society as its core mission for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Religion plays not only the spiritual but also the value formation and validation role, all crucial in integral development. As further advanced by Belshaw et al., (2001) no matter how advanced materially a country is, without religious dimension’s experience and values, that progress cannot pass for development. Integral mission therefore validates development.

In essence, holistic or transformational development is Kingdom mission i.e. church involved in transforming action for society (Hughes & Bennet, 1998). As observed by Ringma (2004), the role of integral mission to mankind is not simply evangelism and social action. It also involves building families that love God, creating businesses that serve the wider community, and forming institutions that shape society towards Godly destinies. Further, it has a core mandate of evangelism, planting churches, charity work, the quest for justice, social transformation, among other works.

Integral mission promotes the good of every person and the whole person in the cultural, economic, political, social and spiritual aspects, without separating them into component parts. As Myers (2000) observes, integral development has among its key characteristics sustenance, equity, justice, freedom, participation, cultural life, ecological soundness, dignity and self-worth for mankind.

Integral mission has a crucial role of promoting social justice as a tenet of holistic development. As Padilla (2005) observes, Wheaton 1983 Statement opined that congregations must not limit themselves to traditional ministries, they must also address issues of evil and social injustices in the local community and the wider society, and it calls upon aid agencies to see it as their role to facilitate the churches in fulfilling their holistic mission to mankind. Further Stott (1997) as cited by Ringma (2005) sees evangelism and social action as partners that reflect the Christian response to the commandment to make disciples and the commandment to love the neighbour and in this partnership, evangelism, according to the Lausanne movement, remains the primary partner.

Integral mission has a role of delivering transformational and true development. As Belshaw et al., (2001) observe, true development improves the life of a total person in a holistic manner, making transformational development as one that helps the poor to recover their true identity as made in the image of God. It also entails positive material, social and spiritual change and as further described by Umali (nd), transformational development is reaching the community with the whole gospel for the whole person through whole churches. As Belshaw et al., (2001) describe, integral development is the work of God, part of God's own mission to the world. Integral mission's role in development is therefore catalytic. As Myers (2000) further observes, God views transformational development as a way to reflect his concern for seeking positive change in the whole of human life materially, socially, and spiritually. It carries the connotation of human progress as inevitable, it takes hard work, and is carried out in an antagonist and opposing worldly environment.

Integral mission's role in development is empowerment by availing opportunities and choices for people to support life. Myers (2000) argues that in transformational development, the development response changes accordingly from feeding people to empowering them, to developing sustainable social systems and mobilizing people's movements. This, according to Myers (ibid), means that true human development involves choices, setting aside that which is not for life in mankind and the community while actively seeking and supporting all that is for life. Integral mission therefore enhances empowerment and positive development.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has given an overview of integral mission, four of its models and challenges associated with implementation of each of the models as well as looking at the role of integral mission in development. Each of the four models outlined in this article which include evangelism (spiritual well-being), demonstration (political, economic and psycho-social well-being only), evangelism and demonstration (spiritual, economic, psycho-social and political parallel), and evangelism and demonstration (combined or integrated) are guided by principles and fundamentals, and each of them endowed with strengths, weaknesses and challenges. A key characteristic of integral mission is reaching the person, community, nations and the globe with the whole and transformative gospel. Social action and evangelism go hand in hand and translates into talking with the people, walking with the people, eating with them and living with them, aimed at meeting spiritual, political, economic and psycho-social needs of the persons, an ideal that integral mission should seek to promote and attain. The bottom line is that ideal integral mission should entail commitment to and involvement with the constituents of development by making them determines their development destinies in a holistic manner, irrespective which approach it takes.

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