

**Title:** Christian-based Economic Relief Efforts and the New Biofuels Industry: An Unbeatable Combination for Crushing Generational Poverty.

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**Abstract:**

The bio-fuels industry, specifically through the cultivation of *jatropha curcas*, represents the next industrial revolution that has the potential of releasing numerous developing world communities from the grip of generational poverty. Current agro-industrial models of biomass cultivation are insufficient to fulfill this important goal to its greatest potential. Rather, bio-fuel microenterprise opportunities following agro-community based biomass production models is the key. Agro-community models focus on the establishment of organized, mutually supportive, small family owned farms. Christian relief groups are uniquely suited to make such models a reality at the community level.

To grasp the significance of current events in the unfolding race for bio-fuel development one need not look further than recent history. Development historians have seen significant impacts of industrial revolutions on national economies. Greater efficiencies from the application of technology to ever more efficient scale economies propelled the United States to its significant economic standing. The electronics industry carried nations such as Taiwan toward developed nation status. Such experiences demonstrate that one of the best opportunities to move an economy from developing world status to developed is through the context of an industrial revolution. Many developing nations are not able to take significant advantage of the electronics industry boon due to lack of educational and institutional resources. At this point in world history a new industry has the potential to help turn the tide for many nations left out of economic boons of the previous century. Bio-fuel production is custom fit to nations with significant agrarian populations still struggling with the processes of development. Availability of experienced agricultural workers; tropical and semi-arid agricultural conditions; environmental and human friendly cultivation; and vast regions of "wasteland" makes *jatropha* biomass production on a broad scale a unique fit to many nations with significant populations locked in generational poverty. With biofuel's demonstrated pollution reduction potential reaching 70%, a cost effective opportunity to help meet the world's rising energy needs, and the building of a new middle class among the world's poorest and most unstable nations represents benefits to the entire world community.

When subject to volatile conditions of third world markets, sustainable livelihood projects are a challenge for aid groups. However, when a well suited opportunity for rural poor appears on the scene, entrepreneurs and relief groups stand to usher in sustaining benefit to the rural poor. It is not the type of approach (philanthropic or for-profit) that makes the difference, it is in the extent of opportunity as well as how that opportunity is embraced and managed. With equity ownership goals for poor families firmly in mind, economic development approaches are better positioned to create lasting change in agrarian societies from the ground up.

It is financially feasible to conduct pilot programs and research on the potential benefits of *jatropha* production in the developing world. It is quite another matter to alter agro-industrial production models toward small farm entrepreneurial efforts. Wealthy industrialists and landowners have the

capital to establish vast plantations to start meeting world energy needs. However, to coordinate the establishment of farms down to the family level, the efforts of well positioned community leadership and relief minded organizations are needed. Christian relief firms, working with local community pastors and leadership, ensure a holistic approach to biofuel development programs that also provide recipients with personal growth opportunities.