



MOBILIZING LOCAL RESOURCES



Reconciled
World

Framework for Transformation

Introduction: Seven Core Principles

This is just one of seven core principles in this Framework for Transformation. All seven work together and reinforce one another as we seek to see God bring transformation to the brokenness in our world. The principles are:

- **Depending on God** - It's God who transforms. We need to look to Him for wisdom, provision, and supernatural intervention.
- **Nurturing Truth and Confronting Lies** - To see transformation in physical poverty and injustice, we must confront the wrong beliefs that undergird them.
- **Integrating Physical and Spiritual** - The biblical teaching that all of life is meant to be lived for God's glory changes how we understand poverty and the way we seek to address it.
- **Partnering with the Church** - The local church, Christ's bride, is key to addressing brokenness.
- **Focusing on the Vulnerable** - To see lives transformed, we must help vulnerable people to reclaim their identity as image-bearers of their Creator and stewards of the earth.
- **Mobilizing Local Resources** - As people stuck in poverty discover and use their God-given resources for God's glory, their thinking is transformed.
- **Pursuing God's Ways** - We need to be intentional and faithful to choose God's ways, which are higher than our own.

You can download PDFs of the other booklets (or request hard copies) and access additional articles, stories, and blogs about these seven core principles at frameworkfortransformation.org

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MOBILIZING LOCAL RESOURCES

If you have ever stepped off the plane in a developing nation or done a few seconds of research on the internet you know that we in the West are incredibly blessed. When we think of malnourished children dressed in rags and living in one-room shacks, we feel a certain urgency to give. The last thing that jumps to mind is challenging them to raise local resources. I mean, they can barely keep themselves alive—what do they have to give? And why should they, when we have so much?

We know the Bible says, “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?” (1 John 3:17). It’s clear we need to be generous. Faced with both the reality of the extreme needs and the commands of the Bible, it seems to make no sense to talk about asking the most vulnerable to give.

So why in the world should we raise local resources?

The development community has already acknowledged the importance of community mobilization in some ways—often requiring a local contribution in an effort to create sustainability and ownership. Yet they still believe that those they are helping are largely unable to really play a significant role. The thinking is: if vulnerable people were able to have a real impact in their community, they would have already. So while development agencies have come to believe in the importance of local resources, they expect only a token effort—attending a community meeting, carrying some bricks, or some other labor.

I worked with a development organization, so from early on I had heard that local resources are important. Like most everyone else, our expectations of what the community could contribute was minimal. For the most part, we didn't even look to the community itself, but expected the "local contribution" to come from the government. Largely, our organization provided over 90 percent of the funding, and we worked with the government to determine what was needed. The community contribution, if it existed at all, was more of a token gesture. They were very poor, after all.

After learning about the real importance of mobilizing local resources, I decided to give it a try. I didn't really expect much, but certainly was able to imagine that a church motivated to show love to their community could clean up their litter. And so we got started.

The first projects mostly focused on churches using their time and energy. Community members helped each other in the fields, cleaned up the community water system, cleared the blocked drains along the dirt roads in their villages—things that didn't require any finances but made a significant difference. People too sick to plant their fields were saved from financial ruin by the help of their neighbors. Cleaned water sources reduced waterborne illnesses. Roads that had previously flooded—creating huge mud puddles and making travel almost impossible for months of the year—became usable. I thought those were impressive accomplishments. Many lives were helped. While I could imagine the churches continuing to do such projects, I couldn't have guessed that their efforts were actually going to result in whole communities moving out of poverty.

In time, the churches took things to the next level. They dug wells, built houses for widows, and created roads to reach their fields. Most of the materials they used were available for free—mud, leaves, and rocks. The cost of the typical project was still well under \$50. For communities where the average person foraged for food for three months a year, these projects were

“I couldn't have imagined that, using only local resources, whole communities would move out of poverty.”

incredible. I was amazed and humbled, but the low budgets made them seem somehow “do-able” in my mind.

Then the churches started on even bigger projects, like building water or irrigation systems and bridges. Some of these projects cost thousands

of dollars. I became suspicious. Where in the world was all this money coming from? Were they calling relatives or contacts in the major cities or abroad? I started to investigate more, asking the leaders of the churches where they had gotten the resources for these big projects. They were vaguely confused. "From us," they responded every time, "We don't have any contacts abroad."

I found that the communities had actually funded these projects themselves. Between the impact of the earlier projects (increased harvests, better roads that enabled them to reach markets, fewer costs from preventable illness...) and God's blessings (like miracles of healed land and bumper crops during droughts) their incomes had multiplied. And because they were in the habit of giving, it was natural for them to contribute from their abundance to bless others. Today those same areas have built brick and concrete two-story homes along with huge suspension bridges. Community members have even bought cars, which they use to help people get to the hospital (as well as everywhere else). There never were outside resources—everything came from their own efforts and God's blessing.

Why mobilize local resources?

Over the years, I have learned that there are a number of reasons to mobilize local resources beyond simply "creating sustainability." Here are a few:

Giving is commanded

The first reason is quite simple: giving is commanded. Throughout the Old Testament, God commands His people to tithe whether in times of abundance or need (Malachi 3:8-10, Leviticus 27:30-32, and Deuteronomy 12:6-7, to name a few). In the early Church, the tithe seems to have been replaced by a practice of giving all (Acts 2:44-45). The verses on giving in the Bible aren't limited to those who have much. The Bible makes it clear that everyone needs to be giving. There are numerous examples of those with little giving what they have. The widow who gave up her last meal (1 Kings 17), the widow who gave two mites (Luke 21:1-4), and Paul's commendation of the Macedonian church's generosity in the midst of extreme poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1-2) come to mind.

“As we learn to give, we start to see all that God has given us.”

While it is true that not everyone can easily give finances, everyone has something to give—maybe time, wisdom, creativity, or problem solving. Maybe they have the ability to cook, to cut hair, or to construct a house. Not only can every person give, we must. As we learn to give, our faith matures. We stop looking at what we don't have and start to see what God has already given us. Giving teaches us to use the resources that God has given us well, to steward them wisely.

If we want to see churches around the world strengthened, we need to help them to understand and obey the Bible's teaching on giving.

Giving opens the door to God's blessings

We are told that we will receive from God in the same measure as we give (Luke 6:38). It's how He has set up the world to work. We've seen this in our work amongst poor people as they have learned to give. In one area there was a village whose bridge was washed away in a flood. Their village was on one side of the river and the school and market on the other side. The river was in a deep ravine and dangerous to cross by boat, especially during the rainy season. Given their urgent need for a bridge, the village representatives went to the government to ask them to replace the bridge that had been destroyed, only to be told that there was no budget to build a bridge at this time. Finally the church decided to do what they could and build a small, simple, bamboo bridge (the sort you need some courage to cross because it looks like it might fall down). The government was so impressed by the church's actions that they decided to reward the community with a large steel and concrete bridge suitable to drive trucks over. While I might have been somewhat frustrated that my work was wasted, the church was delighted. They saw it as a testimony of how God multiplied their efforts. They did what they could and built something that was sufficient to get children to school (but certainly would not get their crops to market). Then God took their humble efforts and multiplied it into a solid bridge.

It's not the only case of this happening. Early on in the program a team from Myanmar came to visit to see the work for themselves. While they were shocked at the transformation that they saw in the communities, they also declared that it would never work in their own country. They explained that their government was one of the most corrupt in the world and

would never help their church the way this nation's government had. We argued that they were observing a miracle! The government in the nation where we worked still had a policy of systematic persecution against the church, so the fact that it was helping the church could only be something God had done. Nevertheless, the Burmese team left discouraged, believing that there was no way that it could ever happen in their country.

A few years later, when the work had started in Myanmar, I visited to see how things were going. I was amazed to hear testimony after testimony of what the government had done to multiply the efforts of the church. In one area the government had built clinics and schools for all the communities that were involved in reaching out and serving their community. Nothing like that had ever happened before.

Every time I have asked a community how they've seen God multiply their efforts, they have answers. Sometimes He uses hostile governments. Other times their land simply grows more. Sometimes it's not financial blessing but peace with their neighbors or with the government or growth of the church. Occasionally, God has used non-profit organizations or missionaries to provide what is needed (before you get too excited, read on. In later sections we'll address the damage our missionary giving can do and how to proceed with caution).

If we want the churches we are working with to know God's blessings, then we need to be challenging them to give. We need to be careful that we aren't stealing the blessings of the poorest people. When we turn up, giving what they are able to, we rob them of knowing God's blessing. Instead they are left

with our efforts. Given God's incredible storehouse of blessings and His knowledge of exactly what is needed in any situation, this is a terrible exchange. Wouldn't we want those who we are working with to know God's blessings?

“If we want churches to know God's blessings, we need to challenge them to give.”

It breaks the lie of dependency

Whenever I teach on this topic in Majority World countries, I ask the church leaders to come up with the list of reasons why mobilizing local resources is so important. (Always a good teaching tactic—when I think the class is going to disagree with me, I have them come up with the argument for why the teaching is correct.)

The number one reason that Majority World pastors give for the importance of mobilizing local resources is: it breaks the poverty mentality (or, as we often refer to it, the lie of dependency).

All around the world people are stuck because they're waiting for help. Communities are paralyzed and projects are unable to move forward because they cannot see the resources that God has already given them. Instead of taking action, they wait for outside resources.

A few years ago, I met a man who shared that his dream was to open a school. He spent hours every day in the church praying that God would send him money for a school. Then, after

studying the stewardship principle, he came to understand that God expects us to use what we have. He looked around and realized the soil around him was perfect for making bricks and he was, by trade, a brickmaker. So he made bricks. Some he used to build the school's walls and others he sold to buy materials like rebar and a blackboard. His community now has a school.

This man is far from alone. There are thousands of people around the world praying that God would send them a foreign benefactor when they have unplanted land. Similar to the brickmaker who couldn't see he had both the resources and talents he needed already, they are blind to what they already have. They have been taught to look to the West for resources, and so they do. Waiting, hoping, and praying.

Mobilizing local resources causes people to look around and examine again what God has already given them. As we remind them, in the parable of the talents we see that the master didn't multiply the servants' talents until they were using what they already had. It's no different for us. We must start by wisely using what God has already given us and see what happens.

Once the lie of dependency is broken, it's incredible what people are able to do and how it changes their identity. They look around again to see what they can use. And once they get started, the benefits from the first projects often

“ Mobilizing local resources causes people to look around and examine again what God has already given them. ”

create momentum that help fund even more projects. For example, once a path to crop areas has been widened into a road, farmers can carry crops in carts instead of on their backs or heads; they are able to grow and sell so much more. And so their incomes jump. That income, together with a new belief that they can change the future, paves the way for even more initiatives.

It points people to God

For years the West has inadvertently taught the poorest people that we are the solution to their problems. We arrive with the best intentions, handouts, and big expensive projects. Those living under the lie that they can't do anything quickly come to believe the next lie—that hope comes from the West. That's where the money is and that's what will save them. The result is that believers all around the world are praying desperately that God would bring them outside funding.

Read that slowly: All around the world, people are praying to the God of endless resources—who is filled with love and wisdom and knows exactly what we need and when we should receive it—that a foreigner, not God Himself, will provide what they need.

It's a horrible exchange. We are created to be dependent, but our hope is intended to be not in other broken people, but in God and His provision. In reality, one of the most important things we can do for vulnerable people is to point them back to God. We look in depth at this issue in the booklet "Depending on God."

By mobilizing local resources we help to refocus people's eyes on God as the provider of what they need. As shared in the stories above, as churches do what they can and trust God to multiply, He often answers their prayers with miraculous provision.

“One of the most important things we can do for vulnerable people is to point them back to God.”

It restores dignity

Another of the top answers that Majority World pastors always give when asked why we need to raise local resources is that it gives back people's dignity. They get feisty on this point, pouring out their frustrations about having to bend to donors' requirements, accept projects they never wanted, and appease the whims of others. They also lament the times that outside resources have resulted in broken relationships and church divisions, as jealousies and competitiveness break out.

I too have witnessed the brokenness that outside funding can create. Some of the pastors that I have admired most have buckled to the temptation of easy money and made unwise decisions. Churches have been neglected as they have chased foreign dollars. Church networks have been destroyed by money. As one person said, “The reason handouts are so bad is that it has left us as a nation of beggars. We don't do anything but look to the West for money. There is no hope for a nation like that. Just shame.”

By just handing out money, we leave those who receive feeling like beggars. God designed each of us to rule and steward creation, to play a role in building God's kingdom. Being a recipient of handouts instead of a God-ordained steward undermines our identity. While the church or community may get what they want (although, according to the leaders I speak with, that's fairly rare), in the process they lose a part of their identity as kingdom builders.

That said, I have also seen the alternative—people who stand up proud as they share what they have accomplished. I love listening to people share what their churches have been doing in the months since we last met. The toilets they've built—complete with rice sacks to give privacy—might not be as impressive as the beautiful toilet blocks that are built with international aid money, but the sense of accomplishment that comes with them is immense. No one looks downcast as they share what they have achieved.

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It ensures we are meeting real needs

As mentioned in the section on dignity, one of the great frustrations of outside resources that we've heard from Majority World church leaders is that as 'beggars' they could not get what they wanted, but had to put up with what outsiders wanted to give them, which was often unhelpful.

We can somewhat understand this on a personal level if we've ever been on the receiving end of a church meal ministry. If the church decide to help my family through a difficult time by providing meals, we are left eating largely what everyone else thinks we might enjoy. Some of those meals might be exactly what we would cook ourselves, but other dishes might leave me wondering. If it's a fantastic church, they may take a little time to establish things like whether I like spicy food or not. But largely the attitude—unintended and unspoken—is that recipients should be grateful and not fussy. And so we are left peering at dishes of lasagna and wondering what to do about the fact that tomatoes make us rashy. Do we eat it and try to be grateful or do we toss it?

That happens on a more global level. Many of our brothers and sisters around the world have long prayed for a foreign benefactor. Having finally found one, they aren't going to do anything to jeopardize that precious relationship—certainly not disagree with you or tell you that your idea isn't helpful, even if you are one of the few who takes the time to ask. So despite the fact that what you are suggesting may not be at all useful, they feel obliged to go along with it, hoping that your next initiative will be more helpful.

I once led a workshop at a large training center. Downstairs a group was holding a loud seminar on worship. I went down to see if it was possible to negotiate being a tiny bit quieter since we couldn't hear each other in the training I was conducting upstairs. When I got down there, I was surprised to find a friend's denomination—one that prides themselves on their worship—together with a group from Australia who was teaching on worship. I asked why they were having a seminar

on worship since it was something that they were already very strong in. “Oh,” she replied, “For the money.” She explained that many people wanted to come lead worship seminars. Those people also paid all the costs of the seminar, which helped cover the costs of running the head office. So, even though the seminar wasn’t seen as necessary or helpful, the denomination just gathered the youth who loved a great time of worship and let the outsiders have their seminar. “It’s what you have to do,” she shared, “to build good relationships and get money.”

When projects are at least partly funded by local giving, they tend to line up with what the community wants. Going back to our overly simple example of the church meals ministry, if you told me that I had to provide all the ingredients for the dishes, I sure wouldn’t be giving you the ingredients for lasagna. I would instead find a way to let you know that’s just not what I am looking for. Since I’m not only the recipient, but part of the project, I regain my voice. The same happens in communities around the world. If they actually have to give sacrificially towards the project, they are going to be much less likely to go ahead with something they really don’t want. They may still say “yes” (since they don’t feel they have enough power in the relationship to say “no”), but nothing will actually happen.

It creates ownership

Almost inevitably, interventions need more inputs at some stage—the well needs repair, the medical center needs new supplies (or just cleaning). Unfortunately, more often than we would like to imagine, when the initial project resources come from outsiders, with little to nothing contributed by the com-

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munity, this upkeep doesn't happen. You can travel around the world and find endless numbers of neglected and abandoned projects—from dirty water systems to empty

buildings, from filthy rural clinics to toilet blocks used for storage. Perfectly good projects sit around unused or wasted because no one maintained them.

We Westerners can get very frustrated by this situation. After our hard work and sacrifice to provide the clinic or the toilet block, why doesn't the community appreciate, utilize, and care for it?

There are two main reasons why that doesn't happen. One: they never really wanted it in the first place, so it sits neglected. Or two: beliefs...by providing outside resources, we haven't changed the incorrect belief that they need outsiders to come and help—we've reinforced it. Those who gave expected the recipients would take responsibility. Those who received assumed those with all the resources would maintain what they created. And so both parties sit around, frustrated at the other, while the perfectly good project goes to waste.

How do we encourage local giving?

The reality is that many people we work with truly think they have nothing. It isn't laziness that causes them to wait for you to give to them; they sincerely believe the lie that they are helpless and need an outsider to save them. However, as we share stories of how other churches who were similarly poor managed to use what they had to move out of poverty, the most common response is joy and hope, or at least cautious optimism. When I teach that God expects them to be good stewards of whatever they have, no one reacts as if I am being mean or asking too much. Sometimes people do tell me that mobilizing local resources is impossible. But because I have witnessed hundreds of churches and communities obeying God in this and experiencing His provision, I can assure them that it is quite possible. Here are some techniques that I've found effective as we seek to break the lie of dependency that holds so many nations in poverty.

Teach truth

Jesus tells us plainly that truth sets people free (John 8:32). We need to teach truth that confronts the lie of dependency. Some of the truths that Majority World churches need to understand include:

- **We have been given so much.** Most of us are much quicker to identify what we don't have than what we do have. All of us, and especially the materially poor, need to be reminded that God has not forgotten to give us anything. In fact, He has given us much to be grateful for.

- **We need to steward wisely what God has given us.** In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-29), the master multiplied the resources of those servants who had wisely used the talents entrusted to them. Regardless of how much or how little we feel we have, we need to steward it well, recognizing it all belongs to God.
- **Everyone is expected to give.** Most people trapped in poverty believe they are too poor to give, that others should give to them. We need to help people see that the Bible didn't make that distinction.
- **God hasn't left any of us unable to contribute.** As we realize that God has given us something, we also need to recognize that all of us have the ability—and the calling—to be part of building His kingdom.
- **You can give time, talents, and non-money resources.** Most churches understand tithing as the primary form of giving. We can help church leaders to see other ways people can give and to think creatively about how these gifts can be used to support the church.

The booklet “Nurturing Truth and Confronting Lies” looks more closely at the impact of various lies, the power of key truths to bring change, and how to identify lies and bring truth to communities.

Help people to see the resources they have

Despite my passion for mobilizing local resources, one of the things that always makes me feel a little nervous is when I hear stories of widows who can't feed their children giving

money. Now I do know that there is a level to which it is biblical. But often it reflects the fact that the church sees money as the resource that is required for kingdom building. Since they have focused for so many years on what they don't have, they have typically lost the ability to see what they do have. An important role that we, as outsiders, can play is helping open their eyes to the non-financial resources they already have and how they could be used to glorify God.

Every community has an incredible abundance of resources—people with gifts and talents, relational abilities, and natural resources such as water, trees, or soil. Typically they also have some sort of tools, bicycles, and pots and pans. Then there are the relevant skills that they have—they can build a fire or a house, cook a meal, farm. They have strength and energy, the ability to move, and—maybe most important—the Holy Spirit who gives wisdom and answers to prayer. Made in God's image, they have the ability to make plans and decisions, to be creative, and to solve problems. Churches often have a building, some sort of leadership structure, and (in some nations) influence. When we start to help the poorest churches to see all that they have, they are generally amazed.

Start small and simple

Once people start to realize what they already have, I ask, "What can you do for others using all these gifts and talents, all that is easily accessible? What can you do without using any money at all?" We challenge them to do something small and simple. We call these first projects Acts of Love (other programs have similar projects with different names). Rather

than requiring material resources, early Acts of Love often involve 10-30 members of the church getting together and volunteering for half a day. But the impact can be massive. Water systems are restored back to usefulness, land that had sat unplanted produces a harvest, terrifyingly dirty health clinics are made clean and much safer for the next patient, new roofs go on houses of widows, and children have a bridge to get to school.

Beyond the immediate impact on the person or community, success in these early projects starts to change the way community members see themselves. Instead of identifying themselves as victims and dependent on outsiders, they realize they are able to do something impactful. It also unlocks greater levels of giving. Quickly, churches get to a point where they are doing more and more. As one church leader shared, "I had no idea how this program would work. I thought that we could only ever do small things because we were so poor. But now I see that as we give and do small things, then God blesses us and we are able to do big things."

Similarly, in other programs we challenge churches to think of the smallest thing that they can start doing. It may be holding a youth day for the siblings of children with disabilities. It may be organizing a half-day marriage class in a community with high rates of domestic abuse. As churches are challenged to use what they have

“Success in these early projects starts to change the way community members see themselves.”

to serve a particular need, they are endlessly creative in the possibilities they come up with.

While it's tempting to want to start with something more significant that will meet what we perceive as the most urgent needs, in reality it just leaves our partners behind. While it might meet the need for water, it doesn't meet their need to understand all that God has given them, to learn to look to God for provision, and to break the lie that they are helpless. If that's not enough, our efforts may not actually be what they truly want (even if they tell you it is), and therefore it will not end up getting used or maintained.

Challenge people to give

Very few of us give sacrificially unless someone challenges us or encourages us to do so. Simply put, we need to challenge vulnerable people to give. We also need to be aware of common barriers to giving and how to help people overcome them.

Make Space

Quite simply, leave space. We should never be giving all that is needed for a project. If we truly believe that local giving is important, then there should be some sort of gap between what is needed to do the project and what we are giving.

Get Creative

For those who have never been challenged to give, those first efforts can feel a little overwhelming—especially for those who struggle to have enough to feed their family. Sometimes we need to help them to think creatively about how they can

raise what is needed. In one area, one of our partners ran out of money to do the training. The churches they were working with were incredibly poor and, while they could bring their own lunch, the cost of transport and materials was beyond them. While we could have helped our partner to cover all these costs, we knew they would then need help year after year after year. Covering these costs wouldn't have helped them to build a sustainable organization. So we worked with the partner to try to find another way to pay the costs. As they brainstormed with the churches, some of the churches realized they had plenty of land and could raise a garden, sell their vegetables, and use the proceeds to pay for the training. In that area people now give of their time to work in the garden in order to cover the costs of training.

“Once they see what might be possible, churches become incredibly creative.”

In another area, they realized they could all work for one day as daily laborers and use that money to pay for the training. Instead of thinking of the training as a three-day event, they saw it as a four-day event—one day working in the fields and three days learning. The ownership they felt in what they were learning and their pride in their accomplishment to pay for their own training was immense. In an area where war had robbed them of all their dignity, working for their training was incredibly healing.

While I have seen many churches become incredibly creative in their projects, there are times when it is helpful to share what others have done to inspire their creativity. Once they

see what might be possible, they are quickly able to come up with their own list of possibilities.

Build skills

For those working with a large organization or denomination, the issue of raising local resources can be more complicated. You may need to help the in-country team to develop the skills to raise resources. As mentioned in the “Focusing on the Vulnerable” booklet, people need to be both willing and able in order to change. While they might be willing (in reality many development staff and denominational leaders are excited by the idea of not having to be ‘beggars’), they aren’t always able. Trying to think about how to raise \$10,000 locally can be somewhat paralyzing. Without training that helps to develop skills, there is little ability to move forward. In this case, if we are to mobilize local resources it is helpful to provide training or point them to existing resources. Development Associates International has an excellent, free, online course that I would recommend. (<https://daintl.org/programs/online-learning/>)

Break it down

Coming from a Western background, we constantly hear appeals broken into smaller amounts such as “sponsor a child for \$1 a day.” But in countries where giving hasn’t been emphasized, they are unfamiliar with ways of breaking down the numbers and explaining them so they feel achievable. Often they remain stuck in the mindset that only the richest can give, so the ways they think of raising funds are limited to finding the wealthy in their nation and asking them for money. However, even poor people can give significant amounts when they pool their resources. A small group of 10 people each

giving 50 cents per week can contribute \$20 per month to a project they truly care about.

In one nation our goal was to raise \$10,000. Initially the sum seemed impossible. At first, we were overly focused on who we knew with that sort of money they could give. However, as the local leadership team worked it out, they realized that each of the six leaders only needed to find seven families, groups, or churches willing to give \$20 a month. Suddenly it seemed possible. After sitting paralyzed by the idea for the previous three months, the next month they more than achieved their target.

Sometimes we do need to work with our partners to think through different possibilities to achieve a goal like this. Can we break it down into more manageable pieces? Are there options and methods they hadn't thought of? Brainstorming together might help them see things that they haven't thought about themselves.

How about outside funding?

While we definitely need to be mobilizing local resources, where does that leave those of us with abundant resources and a heart to give? Clearly the Bible's commandments about giving apply to us as well. So what do we do? I've met lots of people who maintain a stance that "since it's commanded, any giving is good" and so, regardless of warnings that maybe they are doing more harm than good, they plough ahead. While this may be the easiest path and one that makes us feel good, we

must commit to a better way. Our giving cannot be at the cost of others' physical and spiritual wellbeing. It's not honoring to God or to vulnerable people, and it most certainly is not what the Bible teaches.

Even in the Bible, Paul made it clear that handing out meals took a bit of discernment. In 1 Timothy 6:1-16, he outlined rules for the distribution of food to widows: it wasn't just for every widow who was hungry. Rather, those who had other means (in that culture, getting remarried or relying on family) were expected not to look to the church for provision. Then, in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Paul writes, "If you don't work, you don't eat." Paul definitely was not advocating that the church provide meals for those who had the capacity to provide for themselves. Even in the first century, discernment was needed.

Today things are significantly more complicated than the days of Jesus and Paul. At that time "your neighbor" primarily meant people who lived in your area, who you had probably known your whole life. First-century believers would have already known the ins and outs of their neighbors' lives. Life, like in much of the Majority World today, was much more collective. People didn't live behind gates, but shared life together. While the Samaritan woman snuck off to the well by herself in the heat of the day, you can be sure the rest of the women gathered at the cooler hours and chatted. Life was lived publicly and every person's challenges were well known and, I am guessing, well discussed. They certainly knew who fit into each of the categories that Paul described.

We are commanded to love our neighbor and give food to the hungry, but if discernment and wisdom were needed in the first century, they're even more needed today. Now, while we may barely know the names of our physical neighbors, we have access to 24/7 information about tragedies, injustices, and deprivation of people in every corner of every continent. Ignoring those needs is certainly equivalent to walking past the robbed and beat-up man on the road. But how do we truly help our neighbors on a completely different continent, where we barely understand the culture, not to mention the backgrounds of each individual? We often don't even realize what we don't know. Do they have land sitting unplanted? If so why have they not planted it? Do the orphans in the orphanage have parents? (More than 80 percent do). If so why are they in an orphanage? Has this family worked diligently all their lives but just never caught a break, or are the husband and wife alcoholics? Without having grown up together, knowing the ins and outs of each other's lives, discerning whether a handout is helpful or harmful is a little more tricky.

“ *If discernment and wisdom were needed in the first century, they're even more needed today.* ”

If we are going to serve in ways that bring the greatest possible benefit and avoid doing harm, we need to understand a few key ideas. We must not wade in, moved by need, and declare that all giving is good.

The problem of dependency

Dependency in this context is when we are relying on someone else to provide what we need. Typically it's money or other material resources.

We need to remember that those we work with, like ourselves, are driven by what they believe to be true. For most people stuck in poverty in the Majority World, common beliefs are that they can't do anything themselves, they need someone to give to them, they are inferior to others, and those who have the resources should give freely to them. While we know it's not true, many materially poor people believe that Westerners or international organizations have an endless flow of money available and they, because they have nothing, deserve to receive it.

When we turn up giving handouts—money, food, or any other material goods—we affirm this belief. Furthermore, as we set up systems that give continuous handouts we train people to rely on us. One extreme example that was mentioned in the “Nurturing Truth and Confronting Lies” booklet is that of South Sudan. In some areas where the land is fertile, they have been receiving airdrops of food for so long that they never plant their land. It's a tricky situation. If the airdrops stop, the people will literally face a famine because they haven't planted their land so there is no food to harvest. But as long as the airdrops of food continue, they have no motivation to plant their land. Since they already have food, planting is a waste of time and energy.

On a less dramatic scale, the problem of dependency is happening all over. It plagues the organization that is paying the pastor's children's school fees. The pastor hasn't sought to find ways to increase his income because he has become dependent on that organization to provide. If they stop sending money, the pastor's children will no longer be able to attend school.

I've been asked many times what is so bad with this. If the organization has the money, and the pastor is needy, why not pay the school fees? The Bible teaches us to give, so isn't giving a pastor the school fees for his children each year an excellent way to use our resources?

Before we answer that, there are a few things that we need to understand.

We are designed to be dependent. However, we are supposed to be dependent on God, not on others. When we are the ones that step in to provide for someone's needs, it causes those we are helping, in this case the pastor, to shift their focus from God to us as the source of their provision. We are weakening their faith.

While our resources are more than what those we are seeking to help can provide on their own, they are just a drop in the bucket of what God can provide. Furthermore, God knows EXACTLY what each person needs, whereas we are left guessing. Causing someone to exchange the vast storehouse of God's blessings for our limited provision does not truly help them or glorify God.

Too often, we are turning up in a community with no real understanding of what is happening, the community dynamics, or the individuals' backgrounds. By giving to one person, we can cause all sorts of tensions, jealousy, and disappointments without realizing it. Rarely does an influx of foreign money create great community unity. Some people either get more money

and resources or, if it's a community based project, a few people generally get more power or influence. It can quickly divide the community and is probably the greatest source of disunity among churches in the Majority World. In the example of the pastor's school fees, people become jealous that the pastor has a benefactor. They don't really know how much was given or for what. Was the money for school fees actually meant for the most needy children and he used it for his own? Was there more money and he didn't give it to others but kept it for himself? You'd be stunned at the speed that these arguments can spiral. When God provides, that isn't the case. It points people to Him. He gets the glory. And it unifies rather than divides people.

Dependency also weakens those who are becoming dependent on us. Instead of developing new skills and ways to cope, they simply look to us. There is no motivation to improve their lives, use their talents, or plant their land when someone else is giving to them. Because they haven't developed the talents

“Causing someone to exchange the vast storehouse of God's blessings for our limited provision does not truly help them or glorify God.”

that they have, next time they face a problem they are going to be calling again. Their own capacity to survive and thrive hasn't increased. Their capacity to see God bring solutions hasn't increased. So they call you. And if you respond a second time, then you only serve to reinforce the belief that they, as "the poor," are deserving of help, and that you, as the outsider, are the one to provide it. And so it goes, year after year, often with ever-increasing needs. They never develop the skills to provide for themselves and so they are left depending on you to provide.

Unfortunately it doesn't stop there. By depending on us, that godly, deserving pastor that we so want to help becomes a terrible role model for his children and his congregation. Instead of helping them to use well what God has given them, he teaches them to pray, not for wisdom about how to earn an income or for a job opportunity, but for a outsider to turn up with a wad of cash. That's the only way he has known and therefore the only solution he has to offer. And so churches are filled with people praying that God will send them a foreign benefactor when in reality God has already given them what they need.

And then, if that isn't enough tragedy already, more often than we would ever want to admit, the foreign donor loses interest, becomes frustrated with the lack of progress, or runs short of cash. Now the family is really stuck. Their lives are not better from the years of giving, because their capacity to earn funds or creatively solve problems hasn't increased. Instead they are left scouring the internet looking for a new donor.

If we take another example, say a health clinic, the same happens. While we may be happy to raise the money for the building and it is desperately needed, we are left with a number of challenges. First we change the power dynamic of the community— whoever raises such a large donation for the community has more power in that community. They gain a certain status. Unfortunately, that in itself can corrupt. Then there's the problem of who is going to pay for the medical supplies, nurse, and general upkeep. Are you? If not, who? The community members have not overcome the lie that they need outsiders to survive, so they are going to expect you to pay for all these ongoing expenses. They haven't learned to solve problems, mobilize resources, or look to God. And so they are left looking to you to continue to help. And you might...for a few years. But unfortunately, if you travel around the world, you'll see that there are literally thousands of unused, dirty medical clinics. You may believe your situation is going to be different, but so did all the people that gave towards those.

So to make a very long answer short: no. I would not recommend paying for the pastor's children's school fees. Everyone else in his community is facing the same struggle and working it out. This isn't an exceptional situation he finds himself in. What he really needs is help seeing the resources he has and how to use them well—maybe some extra skill development or training for the church to help

“*Helping them see the resources they have and how to use them is hard work in the short term, but oh so much better in the long term.*”

them realize they either need to tithe enough to cover their pastor's salary or decrease their expectations of him so that he can support his family through other labor. It's harder work in the short term, but oh-so-much better in the long term. The pastor will be left as a great role model to his children and community. The church will be strengthened and, as he looks to God for help, his faith will be strengthened.

Fallen Leaders

We also need to understand that money is absolutely Satan's favorite tool to destroy church leaders in the Majority World. While in the West, pastors often seem to struggle with morality or depression, church leaders in Asia and Africa seem much more often to fall to the temptation of misuse of money.

It usually starts slowly and simply, something like this: An outsider gives a chunk of money to a pastor for a training or project. Often this amount is significant, let's say a whole year's salary for them. The outsider assures the pastor that they trust them and won't require any reporting. Then some-one the pastor is responsible for has a medical emergency, and without medical care they will die. The medical care costs ten percent of what was given. Culturally, the pastor has a huge obligation to help (especially if others know they have the money). And the pastor reasons that the training can be completed with the remaining 90 percent. It's a huge temptation. As you can imagine, without any accountability, this is usually the beginning of a path which leads to them justifying taking more and more for less and less critical expenses. Soon they need a car, a house (all for the ministry of course), and on on

it goes. It can all be justified. But it's all misusing funds. And it all starts with receiving a large (to them) amount of money with no accountability for its use.

Then next thing you know, there are projects that are funded multiple times over. Super creative reports are produced. The pastor typically continues to justify using the funds for whatever he deems necessary. "No one wants to fund pastors' salaries," he reasons, so the only thing to do is to open an orphanage and take the surplus from that, since "everyone likes to give to orphans." And thus it's all justified in the pastor's mind because he's doing it to meet the needs of his denomination.

In truth, all this money not only starts the pastor down a slippery slope but brings great disunity to the church. Some become jealous and angry at what they see as misuse (since it's hard to have secrets in most places). Others either copy his model or condemn him for it. Brokenness, disunity and corruption quickly become common in the church.

How do we give wisely?

And yet, we are still left with the fact that we must give. In no way are we advocating that you buy a new boat because the poor don't need your money. Give generously, but give wisely. Here are a few things to ideas:

Identify the right opportunities

Local needs

These booklets are mostly focused on how to help the vulnerable in the Majority World, however it is also good to remember that we are called to love our neighbors in our own area.

There is something about stepping into the needs in your own community that will deepen your faith in ways a short-term missions trip just won't achieve. If you aren't looking at how to give your time, money, wisdom, and contacts locally, then you have missed a great opportunity.

Relief situations

As described in the "Focusing on the Vulnerable" booklet, there are times when people face an unexpected calamity. It's not something that could have been predicted, it's outside of their control, and it's left them in a dire situation. While they might have been poor before, something like an earthquake or a war has caused them to lose everything. On a small scale, where only a relatively few people have been impacted, these are great opportunities for the local church in that area to serve their community. But larger scale situations overwhelm locals' ability to cope. This is where outside resources are completely appropriate.

“ *Give generously,
but give wisely.* **”**

I would personally recommend giving through already established organizations that have partnerships with the church in the affected area. Those relationships are hopefully well-tested, have been through a process of starting small and building

skills, already have accountability in place, and are ready for the influx of funds a disaster can bring.

Training

Another opportunity is to give to organizations who are providing excellent training in the Majority World. Without training, change will not happen. Communities and individuals need to know truth and need the skills to apply it to their lives. This could include anything from rural church training to vocational or income-generation training—anything that is increasing people's capacity to reach their God-given potential while not giving what they could give themselves. In all our trainings we look for a local contribution. In our vocational training program, the students have jobs—gardening or cleaning on a Saturday afternoon—to help them earn their part of the school fees. And in our center for children with autism, even the poorest families are expected to contribute, even if it's just a tiny amount.

Long-Term missionaries

Long-term missionaries play an important role in bridging the gap between cultures. They can develop and maintain long-term relationships that are so important. With years of experience, they can add wisdom to many situations. However, as money moves to short-term teams, less is available for long-term missionaries. This is another area to be praying about giving to. Are there long-term missionaries in the areas where you want to focus?

Bible translation

Translation of materials, especially the Bible, is another great area to give to. The costs for Bible translation are far beyond

what people in the Majority World could typically manage. And yet good, modern Bible translations and discipleship materials are desperately needed.

Justice and advocacy

There are organizations working to stop human trafficking, free slaves, and help vulnerable people navigate the legal system. These are all great giving opportunities because the costs and complexity of legal services mean that those who need them most rarely access them. Again, I would look for organizations with a good record of success.

Take time

In the booklet on “Partnering with the Church” we explore the challenge of “fast, big, urgent.” These are some of the key cultural values that we as Westerners often bring to efforts to help vulnerable people. It’s important to realize that these words—fast, big, and urgent—are a considerable stumbling block to our efforts to give. When we give too quickly or too much we can cause others to stumble. Instead, our giving should always be a prayerful reaction to what God is leading us to do.

We need to pray and fast as we seek to give, recognizing that misplaced giving may actually create more problems than we ever intended. I read an article yesterday about how the UN created one of the worst famines in the world by digging wells—a seemingly good idea. But as a result of the wells people had more cattle and became less nomadic, so when the usual droughts came they weren’t able to walk off to another

area and, as a result, many died. If the UN, with all its experts, can get it so horribly wrong, then it's all too possible that we could as well. As much as we want to believe that our giving won't harm, it can and often does.

“God doesn't ever get it wrong. He knows exactly what is needed and when.”

But God doesn't ever get it wrong. He knows exactly what is needed and when. So we need to be praying that God would make it completely clear when to give and how much to give, and that we wouldn't be driven by apparent need but by what He is saying. When we are seeking God's guidance and keeping in step with the Holy Spirit, we can be sure we are giving in ways that are multiplying what God is doing, rather than undermining it.

Create partnerships

I have a friend who wrote a paper on partnerships between churches in the West and churches in the rest of the world. He compared money to sex. Given too early in a relationship, where partners haven't entered into a covenantal, faithful relationship, it can cause all sorts of harm. Now clearly the metaphor falls to bits rather quickly. But his point is clear and helpful: money is powerful, it changes the relationship significantly, and it's definitely not for one-off relationships, but where you have a long-term partnership with a church, denomination, or local organization.

Communicate well

We receive proposals all the time. People invite us to do a training and then send us a proposal for the \$5000 that it's going to cost. It includes everything from their planning time to generators. We always take time to share with our partners what we do and don't pay for. We explain that we expect our partners to contribute. Typically, we ask them to start with things that aren't additional costs for them. For example, if they already own (or rent) facilities suitable for a meeting then we won't cover "training location." We also don't cover their time to pick us up or to do planning. We then also talk through the expenses. Do we really need \$600 for snacks? Can't they jump in their car, drive to the local grocery store and buy some drinks and packets of biscuits? We have found that all of our partners have been more than willing to significantly rework the budget. While I was drafting this booklet, we worked with a partner to shift their training budget from \$5500 to \$1500. They had prepared a budget like they always did for all foreign partners. When we explained that we didn't work like that, they were happy to make the changes.

Many times partners ask for so much out of habit. They are used to getting this much to run a training and, similar to my friend running the worship seminar, actually see it as a way to raise funds for other financial needs. However, if they believe that what we are offering is valuable, then they ought to be (and in our experience, always are) willing not only to cut costs but to contribute.

Start small

Just as it's best for communities to start small and build skills, it's also best for donors to start small. Starting small has many

benefits. It allows you time to really get to know your partner and how they use money. It gives you time to set up systems. Do you want receipts? If so, how will that be managed? What happens if money is left over? Especially if your partner is a local church, they may not have much experience with managing funds. Turning up with the equivalent of a full year's salary (which may only be \$2000-\$3000 if you are working with a rural pastor) isn't good for anyone.

Starting with something closer to one or two months' salary is much wiser. You allow time for your partner to learn your expectations and time for you to test that they really are a great partner. Sadly, not every potential partner is someone you want to have a long-term relationship with. We'll take a closer look at this on the next section on accountability.

Once your relationship is strong, you can increase the amount you are giving and do larger projects or reach bigger areas.

Decrease over time

It isn't practical to start small in every case. Actually, more often than not, our organization does the opposite. In TCT, we tend to fund the orientation and, over the next two years, work toward a place where we aren't providing any funding at all. In these cases, because we're looking to work with a fairly large number of churches at a time (a minimum of 100 but typically significantly more than that), we need to engage with key decision makers in the nation. We invite them to an orientation where they can learn about the program and get a vision for how it may work in their context. Since they have no idea who we are, asking them to pay for the whole training seems a bit presumptuous. So we cover many of the costs, asking them

to contribute something smaller, like their own transport. Then, at that training, we explain our theology of mobilizing local resources, why we fund very little, and our plan to phase out. By paying more upfront, we are able to get the right people in the room and help them to understand why we won't cover everything. We are looking for people who are committed to a long-term relationship, so we see this as an investment into finding the right partners.

With each subsequent training our goal is to decrease the percentage that we cover. Once people know and understand the program, we feel it's up to them to decide if it's valuable enough to commit their resources to. If by the sixth training they aren't willing to cover all their own costs, we figure we really need to ask ourselves if we are offering something that is actually helpful to them.

Don't give what your partner can give

We've all heard a story of a missions group heading abroad and building a house, orphanage, or church while the local community watches. Some of us have even been on that team! In reality every one of those people could also volunteer—the mere fact that they have time to sit around and watch tells you they have time. By providing what they could have, we are making them weaker. We're reinforcing lies that keep them from flourishing, we're definitely not challenging them to use their talents well, we aren't discipling them, and—if we truly believe it's more blessed to give than to receive—we're robbing them of blessings.

We need to be very wary about giving too quickly to needs in a community. In many cases our partner and/or vulnerable

people can actually play a role in solving the issue without outside help. By challenging them to do so we strengthen the community and our partner.

Remember not all giving is financial and not all contributions look the same

While we must be careful not to underestimate the God-given resources of those we perceive as poor, we also need to be aware of our own tendency to default to thinking of material resources and money as the only valuable contribution.

Wisdom, problem-solving skills, and relationships are also resources our partners have to offer, but too often we don't value or encourage these contributions.

In highly relational cultures, relationships are often used to achieve what money is used for in the West. It's a lesson I had to learn fast when I married into a relationship-based culture.

Imagine your house burned down. In the West our security comes from the fact that we have insurance (hopefully), something that we have worked, earned money, and paid to attain. In other places their security comes from the fact that they have a web of relationships—all of whom will turn up, give a little, and rebuild the house for them.

As Westerners we tend to solve problems using money. I do (or try to) all the time. No train tickets around the day we want to travel? I say, "Let's pay for a flight," even though it's going to cost three times as much and, since there isn't a direct flight, will take about as long. My husband pulls out his endless list of contacts and somehow turns up with train tickets—a friend's relative works for the railway. We need to get a hard

drive to Asia? My solution: Fedex it. My husband again calls everyone he knows to find out who is headed to Asia this week. He spends an incredible amount of time on relationships, but he also has a friend ready and willing to help solve almost every issue he might have. I am endlessly stunned at the things everyone does for each other.

“*We sometimes miss what a community can give because it looks so different than the way we do things.*”

These relationships and ways of getting things done, which have been built with years of investment, don't easily have a dollar value. Yet, as we try to make sure we

aren't doing what our partner is capable of, we don't want to quickly discount their ability to make things happen without finances.

Another reason why we sometimes miss what a community can give is that it looks so different than the way we do things. I was sharing with a friend recently about my efforts to teach project planning to Majority World villagers with little education. I may as well have been speaking another language. Putting every step on paper in chronological order and then prioritizing them just gave them a headache. And yet, these same people can complete massive projects. I've seen them build huge bridges requiring “tons of steel and tons of concrete” with no written plan at all. Somehow they are able to store, sort, and manage huge complexity in their heads. The sort of complexity that gives us a headache and sleepless nights is normal to them. But since they can't get things on

a piece of paper in the way a typical Westerner would, we declare them unable to plan. Other times we've managed to teach Western-style planning or helped a church make a plan, only to have them promptly disregard said plan because it's not helpful to them at all. They are used to keeping and sorting information in their heads where it's easily available at all times.

Matching grants

Not everyone we work with is experiencing abject poverty. While this booklet is primarily dealing with working with extremely vulnerable people, often we are partnering with organizations, denominations, or churches that are not themselves the most vulnerable. Matching grants can be a powerful tool to help them as they seek to raise funds. Matching grants basically say that for every dollar you raise we will contribute x dollars. In countries where giving isn't yet common, knowing that their contribution of, say, \$10 will increase to \$30 and be enough to pay for a pew at the church is actually very encouraging. It also challenges those whom you work with to raise funds. Knowing that whatever they raise will be multiplied (and maybe only that), can actually be a huge incentive to actually go out and raise local funds. Many of us need that extra push. We may know that local funding is important and believe that it's powerful, but if it's also the only way that we are going to 'unlock' the rest of the money, we will certainly hustle a little bit harder, pray a bit more diligently, and think a little more creatively.

Be careful of giving too little

I have also seen times when people gave too little. A friend of mine who was a missionary had a local friend who was a

new believer. The missionary challenged this friend to move to a different city and become a church planter. The man left a moderately well-paying job to do so. Unfortunately, the man needed pricey heart medication. Since he moved and lost his income, he could no longer afford the medication. Within three months, he was hospitalized because he hadn't been taking his medication. Over dinner at a restaurant at which the total cost of our dinner would cover a month's heart medication, the missionary shared that he wasn't going to give the man any money for the heart medication because "he didn't want to create dependency."

Our friend was missing a great opportunity to give. There was a long-term relationship, the recipient had already made significant sacrifices, and providing money for heart medication would not have been providing for this man what he could have provided for himself (he was already in the hospital!). My husband and I headed straight to the hospital to help, but the story ended badly. The man became bitter at the missionary and at God; he denounced his faith and returned to the job in the city.

Another circumstance where I've seen too little giving is in trainings. When I've asked local pastors why they don't take the training that they have received from others and teach it to others, the second most common reason is "no money for transport." (The first reason is that it's not relevant or useful.) If we are not taking the time to help these pastors think of creative solutions or how to raise funds, not giving a stipend for transportation can end up stalling the work. In this case the pastors are willing to volunteer their time and the churches are willing to provide all that is needed for the training;

the cost of transport is the only prohibitive factor. It's worth evaluating if there are times when a small amount of funds may help multiply the impact of a program. For many of these trainings, the trainer is flying from outside of the country. For the cost of a few bus rides, they could easily reach 10 times as many pastors and leaders. In cases like this, where the partner is already willing to give considerable amounts, it is worth taking the time to pray about what is wise to give.

Create good accountability

To help make sure we aren't setting our partner up to fail, we do need to provide appropriate accountability for funding. (We also need to be accountable for our side of the agreement—you can read more on that topic in the booklet "Partnering with the Church".) As shared earlier, money, especially the amounts we Westerners often turn up with, can create all sorts of temptations and fractures. We definitely don't want to be the source of causing our brothers and sisters to stumble.

Recently my organization started a new partnership with a denomination. As we always do, we asked them in the beginning to keep a record of how the funds were spent and to provide receipts for key expenses. When the time came, they sent a three-line spending report, so we let them know we needed more detail and asked again for the receipts. Their initial response was, "I thought we were all Christians? Why are you questioning us?" We continued to insist they be accountable. They responded, "We aren't your servants" and then, finally, "We work with hundreds of organizations and we have never been asked for a report on how the money was spent and to

“*When our partner is willing to give considerable amounts, it is worth evaluating whether our funds may help multiply the impact of their program.*”

give receipts.” I wish I could believe that they were exaggerating wildly. The saddest part of this, to me, is that they have worked with “hundreds of organizations” and never been required to have anything but the smallest amount of accountability. In reality, we who have the money are creating and multiplying

the problem. It’s rare that a pastor starts out corrupt. Most are corrupted by the lack of accountability. In this case, as we continued to investigate, the partner was actually very corrupt, and we were forced to end the relationship.

So how do we hold our partner accountable? Here are a few thoughts:

1. Make sure that you have a short, simple, one-page, **written policy** that requires financial accountability. One of the problems with asking for accountability is that it is often perceived as you not trusting. Trust and relationship are key to getting things done in the Majority World, so perceived lack of trust can be a stumbling block. However, if it’s a written organizational policy, then it’s not personal. It’s not about trust. It’s just a requirement. By honoring the policy, they are helping you to honor your commitment to the organization. If you don’t have a policy, I suggest you not enter into any financial relationships until one is drafted.

2. Explain your policies to any prospective partner before you agree to give any money. If possible, have the written document translated. If they respond negatively, then it's not likely they would be a great partner.
3. Start really small. (have we mentioned this yet?) Do a small pilot project together first—something that requires little funding. Even if you agree on a long-term project, start by giving only enough for the first small part. Make sure the systems for reporting go well for that first stage before you proceed.
4. Check the receipts. In my story above, when we did finally get the receipts, we quickly spotted that things seemed to cost two to three times what they should have. Receipts aren't super reliable. In my experience, anywhere in the Majority World that I've traveled, I can go into any shop, buy something, ask for a receipt, and get the same response: they will ask me what amount I want written on the receipt. There are two ways of checking a receipt's accuracy. If it's a hotel, you can generally write and inquire about their rates. With many other things, you can ask someone else who lives there, "How much does translation costs? How much is printing/ photocopying? How much would a typical meal cost?" Again, you can be fairly anonymous, and you certainly don't need to check every single receipt—just a few of the main ones.

Conclusion

The Bible's command to give applies to all of us—you and me, our partners in the Majority World, the poorest widow, and everyone in between. All of us need to be stewarding well what God has given us and giving generously.

For the poorest, personal generosity is a powerful antidote to the poverty mentality (also called the lie of dependency) that Satan has used to trap so much of the Majority World. It points people back to God and opens their eyes up again to what He has given them. We've watched whole communities move out of poverty as they have embraced giving.

But those of us who have more material resources also play a role in giving. And because we have been given much, even more is required in terms of wisdom, prayerfulness, and humility. We must give in ways that truly enable people to experience all God has for them and that do no harm. If we are in a partnership where our giving has been wrong, we need to take time to explain how our beliefs have changed and how our actions will be different as a result. And we need to help them to see the truth of what they are capable of. Then we definitely need to have those difficult money conversations where we look again at the budget and start (rather quickly) to decrease the percentage we are giving.

Let us all be generous and let us be wise. It starts with prayer—asking God to make us good stewards of all He has given us and to give us the discernment we need to ensure our giving doesn't harm another but instead serves to build God's kingdom.

REFLECT AND APPLY

Consider the international work you've been involved with in the past or are part of now. Have these projects included an element of local giving? If so, what did the community contribute? How did it compare to Anna's various experiences ranging from "a token contribution" to "small but impactful" to "completely transformative"?

Have you ever had an experience where giving or serving strengthened your faith and deepened your love for God? Have you ever given sacrificially only to see God bless and provide in a remarkable way? Write out and reflect on the details of that story.

Do you think it's possible for something similar to happen for the vulnerable people you're engaged with?

Anna lists several types of brokenness that are common in communities that receive outside funding. Have you ever personally observed or experienced these in your international ministries:

- Dependency (waiting for you to do everything)?
- Helplessness (or the belief that “we have nothing and can’t do anything”)?
- Inability to see the resources they have?
- Broken relationships and church divisions?
- Your partner agreeing with you on a project, but not following through?
- Corrupt or untrustworthy leaders?
- Projects not being maintained or utilized in the long-term?

Consider your list of problems; what beliefs may be driving each of these situations?

There are several examples in the booklet (the church supporting the pastor's children's school fees and the group funding the worship seminar) where the outsiders have no idea that there are problems festering. What might those ministries do to understand these situations better and partner in healthier ways?

Page 18 makes the claim that every community, no matter how poor, has an abundance of resources. On page 40 we're reminded that knowledge, creativity, and skills are resources vulnerable people possess. Spend some time prayerfully envisioning the community and people you work with in your international ministry.

List their God-given resources in detail:

What are some ways you might help the community see all these resources?

How might you challenge them to think of a small step they could take to use these resources to serve others (without suggesting projects or making plans on their behalf)?

Imagine that you are encouraging your local partners to give. Would they be able to?

Is there space in your program, a gap between what is needed and what your ministry provides? If not, how could you make space for local giving?

Do the people involved have the skills to raise resources? If not, how could you help them build skills?

Is the amount needed overwhelming? How can it be broken down into manageable pieces?

Make a list of all the projects you or your ministry give to.

Now pray through the list, asking God:

- Is this a partnership that is appropriate for funding? Is the timing right? Do we have a long-term commitment?
- Is this giving doing any harm to those we seek to serve? Is there any possibility it's contributing to dependency, disunity, or corruption, or weakening anyone's faith?
- Have we communicated well with our local partners, set right expectations, started in the right place, and appreciated their contributions? Is there anything we're giving that our local partner is capable of giving?
- Do we have appropriate accountability in place?
- Is there anything we need to do differently in order to bring more benefit to our local partner or the people we seek to serve?

Write down anything you hear from God or questions you want to explore further.

Ask God to make it completely clear when to give, how much to give, and any changes that need to be made to current programs and giving commitments. Thank and praise Him because He knows exactly what is needed and when, and He promises that His Spirit will lead us into all truth. Praise God for His power to transform, His limitless resources, and His mercy and grace.



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