

# The Immorality of Aid to the 'Third World' (Africa)

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## **Abstract**

This article points to the immorality of aid provision as practiced today from the West to the 'poor world', especially Africa. The unpredictability of quantities and channels of funding results in donor driven activities encouraging a 'lottery' mentality. Offers of loans are traps that are hard to evade. Windfalls into the formal sector of an economy discourage investment into the critical truly indigenous informal sector. Donor funds' unpredictability can underscore superstitious beliefs, discourage forward thinking and planning, distract people from local but less 'lucrative' means for helping themselves, cause disputes and fighting and perhaps most importantly take away people's responsibility for their own lives. Meanwhile attention by the West is withdrawn from intelligent consideration of how to assist other people's in their struggles, and invested instead into exploring ever more ways of using donor money. Donor activities create dependence. Overseas funds come with access to immoral western lifestyles. The position of westerners as controllers of funds giving Westerners an almost divine status in Africa is idolatrous. This article encourages inter-personal fellowship, mutual assistance and sharing of the Christian faith without donor roles for at least a part of the Western Christian mission force.

The debate as to the true impact and value of aid and development assistance to so called Third World countries continues. I would like to add to it, by suggesting that often the provision of 'aid and development' assistance is not only not helpful. It is also immoral. (Note that I use the term 'man' in the generic sense in this essay that is not exclusive of the female gender.)

## **The Justification of Aid and Development Intervention**

People in the aid and development business rarely take account of the 'counterfactual argument'.<sup>1</sup> They look at a condition at the beginning and end of their intervention. Then they try and explain all changes according to the impact of their intervention. They rarely consider what might have been had they not intervened, or had there been no option for their kind of intervention.

For example, a development plan may be drawn up for a country or region. Various economic indicators are chosen that are thought to show the presence of economic advance. Policy makers take credit for the advances made, and find excuses for their failures. Their underlying assumption is that an economy is somewhat like a machine that ought to behave predictably according to their rules. Their other assumption is that without their intervention things would not have changed.<sup>2</sup>

This rather crude way of treating peoples as parts in a machine, enables those carrying out interventions to take credit for whatever changes are occurring while rarely taking sufficient account of what might have been the case if they had not been there! (Never mind whether the indices that they use are really appropriate, or whether radically different interventions may have been more helpful.)

Such is just one basis on which relief and development aid continues to be justified. It can also be justified on the basis that:

- a. Western people value 'equality'. To achieve a theoretical equality someone should not have what someone else does not have. The greater the difference between what person X has and what person Y has, the greater the effort required to give Y more.
- b. Donor countries have aid budgets that are drawn in advance and then must be spent. The same applies to voluntary groupings such as churches which consider it appropriate to give away a certain proportion of their income. Then there are charities whose whole existence depends on the continuation of the aid / development machine.
- c. There are those who for various reasons make it their business to present guilt traps to people in wealthier nations so as to create moral-pressure for them to contribute finances to aid and development initiatives.

I am often asked about the value or otherwise of aid and development initiatives. Those who promote them use simple arithmetic to demonstrate how advantageously such resources are utilised. They frequently fail to grasp some of the broader and frequently disadvantageous consequences of the use of aid and development funding. I am attempting in this paper to examine these so as to show just how deleterious the overall impact of outside interventions into the Third World (my experience is in Africa) can be.

I am considering these under three heading. Firstly; the problems of wealth, secondly; destabilising distractions, thirdly; situations created.

I have lived and worked in Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya since 1988 (20 years ago as I review this article in 2008). When referring to the 'Third World' or to 'Africa' I do so on the basis of my experience in these three countries, supplemented by some broader reading. I consider that what I write has much wider application across Africa and the Third World in general.

## **A. Problems of wealth**

While wealth itself may not be a bad thing, the way it is acquired is important.

*1. The African lottery?* While there is little doubt as to the popularity of lotteries around the world, their helpfulness to human society is more questionable. Very few people come to win a lottery while very many put their hope and much time and energy into participating in it. The prospect of a big win draws attention out of all proportion to its actual size. Those who do succeed and win vast amounts of money often meet many problems.

Such is the nature of Western money and how it reaches Africa. There are just a few people who hit the jackpot, but they come to be well known in a 'poor' community. They manage to convince a Westerner to be a major donor to their interest or project. The story they tell in order to achieve this may or may not be true. Large amounts of money received (what may seem to be little money in the west can be vast in a place where a month's full-time wage can be £15.00) create many problems. Vast numbers of people are distracted from or lose the motivation to engage seriously their day to day activities, choosing instead to orient themselves to this 'lottery'.

*2. Dubious loans.* The offer of large loans of money, especially if there is little to pay back in the early period, is too much to resist for many people around the world. Many are tempted to take out loans to satisfy immediate needs or to invest in businesses that later prove questionable. The paying back of loans later proves to be an enormous burden. In some cases a bailiff can enforce the taking of property as repayment. People can be deeply troubled and sometimes pauperised by such thoughtless loan taking.

There is always a question in such a situation as to who is actually guilty. The one who has accepted such a loan is on principle asked to repay. But the offering of such a loan can also be considered immoral. Interest rates may be incredibly high. Such loans aim to trap the gullible.

The African cultural scene adds extra pressure for people to take such options. Extended family networks put enormous pressure on people to take available 'quick fixes'.

I suspect that recipients of loans in the Third World rarely understand how repayment is to be achieved. Even if they do understand, there is a good chance that they doubt as to its likelihood. In African ways of life loans are repaid when the donor becomes poorer than the recipient, not when due dates are reached. (Maranz 2001:143-170. I *highly* recommend Maranz's book to those interested in aid and development as well as mission in Africa.) There are many reasons why people will not or even cannot refuse a loan:

- a. Repayment can often be delayed, and is sometimes cancelled altogether.
- b. Even should a key leader responsible for accepting a loan perceive its problematic nature, if others come to know that the loan is being offered they will probably not understand this and will pressurise him/her to accept.
- c. A person accepting a loan is rarely personally liable for its repayment. He will use various means - such as other loans - to repay if need be. An organisation such as a government or a church can be left to repay.
- d. Repayment seems to be a long way off when a loan is taken out. ... etc.

Loans have been used over many years to keep a stranglehold on Third World economies. This forces the countries concerned, and to a lesser extent the organisations or people concerned, to follow close instructions and thus effectively be under the thumb of wealthy beneficiaries. It is time to accept that there should be an acceptance of responsibility on the part of the giver of a loan and not only its recipient. The offering of a loan is indeed often immoral.

*3. The brain drain.* Brains usually follow money. The encroachment of the West into many Third World countries means that these countries have two sectors. The international (sometimes called formal) and then the local (or informal) sector. The latter represents the indigenous people's genuine efforts at helping themselves. But the most capable of the local people jump into the international arena. In this sector earnings are in a far higher league. In this sector also corruption and misunderstandings are rife. The appropriation of the best and most able people into the international sector perpetuates the poverty of the indigenous sector. Sadly the scale and nature of operation of this formal sector is usually so out of proportion to that of the informal sector that those who have succeeded in it have little useful wisdom to share with those left 'at home'. That is, the vast gap between the two means that management and operational techniques learned by people who have functioned in the formal sector, are of little help to them in their interaction with the informal sector. (This principle extends widely, certainly as far as Theological Education available on the African Continent.)

## **B. Destabilising distractions**

Large and/or unpredictable inputs into any system easily have a destabilising affect. The development of an effective indigenous system of operation is hindered or entirely prevented by large, ill placed, unpredictable bombshells or windfalls.. This applies to businesses, voluntary associations such as churches and even governments.

*1. Perpetuating 'superstition'* Ongoing poverty in the third world is often ascribed to people's being primitive or superstitious. It is less often realised that the policy of the West in dealing with such contexts can be responsible for perpetuating (or even creating) such 'superstition'.

Superstitious people are those who ascribe phenomena to spiritual rather than physical agencies, especially ancestral spirits and witchcraft forces. Such happens and is perpetuated in circumstances beyond the normal reasonable grasp of people's understanding. Hence rural people

are said to be particularly superstitious due to the unpredictability of the rainfall and climate that they depend upon.

One effect of 'civilisation', according to some theorists, is that more of life is made predictable as people's lives are further removed from dependence on elements of nature such as vagaries of weather. Superstition is not necessitated to the same extent as an explanatory theory in such a predictable environment.

It is extremely difficult for any such predictable system to develop in the Third World today. (See also Harries 2006.) People do not understand how things that have a great impact on their lives are done, as they are done by foreigners and in foreign ways. Local innovations are swamped by the intrusion of foreign ideas with financial backing. Those who succeed are not diligent and hard working people who follow well thought out plans, but the 'lucky' who know how to sweet-talk outsiders. Significant amounts of income are achieved only through corruption. Finance comes either in trickles, or in windfalls.

Such erratic and unpredictable events are of no help to the development of consistent and productive ways of life. They substantiate and accentuate superstitious beliefs of causality. They all too easily reward the charlatan. Foreigner's ways remain mysterious and to a people historically steeped in witchcraft, are interpreted as being magical. Promoting his kind of belief is a contradiction to Christianity, which sets out to teach monotheism. It is certainly a road-block to many kinds of social progress.

*2. Distraction from 'real' issues.* Development initiatives are demanding of local people's time and efforts. They make it difficult for people to prioritise what is important in their lives. Often the possibilities of financial and material reward arising from a 'new' project being introduced from abroad are too high to resist. Vast amounts of effort are put into getting a share of the cake, to the neglect of other important life concerns. As a result problems that 'should' be solved with careful discussion, planning or wisdom are instead solved with donor money.

Numerous examples of this that are happening in the Third World today could be cited. The proliferation of child sponsorship schemes seems to do away with the need for family planning. The availability of loans for agricultural inputs obviates the need for budgeting. Finance that might have brought business growth are invested in education. (A means of helping one's children get a share of the pie by teaching them how to imitate the West.) Hospital bills eat up capital that may have been invested in productive activities (dying can be very expensive when a family feels obliged to take even terminally ill people to die in an expensive hospital as happens in some parts of Africa). Children who may have been learning useful things from their grandparents are instead stuck in classroom waiting for poorly motivated teachers to drone on about things that are meaningless to their everyday lives, in a language that they barely understand. Late-teenage girls who should have husbands and homes, instead have boyfriends and abortions.

In today's Third World those who work hard to help themselves in honest ways find themselves near the bottom of the social heap and despised or mocked by those who succeed in milking the aid machine. Things that require order and genuine effort to be held together are falling apart.

*3. Destabilising* It is not an enormous exaggeration to say that whatever a foreign donor touches, falls apart. The king who found that everything he touched turned to gold, discovered that this was not always a good thing (Pitchford 1996). The foreigners' hand that always carries money has a similar impact.

Voluntary groups such as churches or self-help initiatives thrive, until someone puts in outside money, at which stage infighting, jealousy, suspicion and witchcraft accusations take over.

Someone's productive small business is destroyed by the importation of cheap foreign products. A relationship between husband and wife turns to arguing and fighting resulting in both turning to drink when the wife gets involved in a foreign funded women's project for making money independently of her husband. A community leader accustomed to serving his people radically re-orientes his behaviour when he realises that those he needs to serve in order to enrich himself are foreigners who have little clue as to his people's problems. Those insisting on the imposition of unfamiliar moral codes are not there to see their impact. For example, the ruling that was brought banning corporal punishment in schools so as to continue to acquire donor funds, that caused chaos in Kenya in 2001.<sup>3</sup>

People revert to telling lies and half-truths in order to protect their well-being and that of their families. A foreign intervention promises x on the condition of y. Y is clearly impractical and the foreigner would realise as much if he were to hang around long enough. There are two options. Telling the truth and watching the money go somewhere else makes you look to be a fool. Better to hide the truth, get the money to feed your family, and hope that the things that fall apart in the process will somehow come right in the end.

Once hiding of things in communication with foreigners has begun it soon gains respectability and becomes the norm. From here on the foreigner no longer realises that his activities are destabilising. What he has in view is the formal sector, which gradually grows as a foreign implant rife with corruption. The local sector on which most people depend limps along in its shadow.

*4. Taking responsibility from people* From time immemorial children have been the responsibility of their parents, or other adults under whose protection they fall. This is no longer universally the case. Child sponsorship schemes have proliferated in Africa. One centre alone may adopt hundreds of children. Details vary, but the overall aim is to ensure that a child gets a good education and upbringing despite the poverty of the parents.

Parents now find themselves beneficiaries of a small windfall through having children. Whole families can seek to live off the 'relationship' this child has developed with a White donor seen in a photograph. A small team of locally recruited salary earning people become foster-parents on behalf of donors from many miles away. The African parents are no longer left to bring up their own children, and the child learns to despise his parents as he knows from early on that his well-being is dependent not on them but on that image on a picture. He has achieved the peculiar status of being African through and through yet also being American, Swedish or British while living in a mud hut with his parents. Projects that take in orphan children giving them Western 'perks' can have some children realise that they could be economically advantaged through the death of their parents.

The implications of this kind of upbringing in an age when African countries are apparently 'independent' are hard to imagine. Is a child not being taught from year dot, that he is unfortunate to be born in Africa, but that all good things come from abroad? Is there not a risk that such children will never come to value their own country or people, until they have first learned to despise those who gave them a hope, that later dwindled and died?<sup>4</sup> These child sponsorship schemes certainly save lives and give someone a 'quality' of life that they otherwise wouldn't have had. But I am dubious as to the long-term effects of the unnatural mind-set that they impart to children.

*5. Inappropriate relinquishing of donor responsibility* The counter-factual must here be considered. Development / aid activities relieve the rich man's guilt burden. When he (or she) sees and hears of 'the poor', he assures himself that he is playing his part through having given some money. Now he can sit back, relax and enjoy life. Focusing on finance as the 'only' means

of helpfully intervening in the Third World precludes other thought and action that may otherwise be very helpful.

The alternative to these kind of projects need not be seen as 'do nothing' (as is suggested by Wolf 2005:2)! Should such an easy way of relieving one's guilt by passing on the surplus of one's economy not to have been found, alternative courses of action could have been established to bring disparate ends of the human race together. In the current state both sides conveniently relinquish themselves of responsibility. Third world parents, because someone else is looking after their children. Donor-nations because they are already 'doing something'.

Thinking people in donor-nations perceive these problems. Because this is the way work in poor countries is defined, they may choose not to get involved with the 'poor' at all. Even should they go to the 'poor', they have enormous standards of charitability to live up to just to gain an audience. They will have an enormous task of breaking through their (Western) people's reputation of only being interested in providing money.<sup>5</sup> They can be left standing aside, in tears. Is it surprising that there are not more people interested in long-term commitments to Third World nations these days when short-term projects are buying-up all the attention?

In reality there are many ways of contributing to life in the Third World apart from giving out money. These ways need urgent opening and exploration for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the future unity (and sanity) of the human race. One of these ways is 'vulnerable Christian mission'. There is an urgent need for Christian missionaries whose ministry is engaged using local and not foreign languages and resources.

### **C. Situation created**

Continuous pre-occupation with foreign donor funding 'creates' artificial circumstances. Many of these may be extremely unhelpful to general social progress.

*1. Creation of dependence* Enormous international trade has in recent years brought great inter-dependence of peoples in distant corners of the world. Given the advantages of trading and the benefits that accrue to all when specialisation of task is allowed, this is generally seen as a good thing that brings a net gain in economic standing of the world's people. In other words, co-operation has many advantages over the alternative scenario in which every family provides for all their own needs from a small piece of land. Nations these days depend on one another, so why is this not a good thing for Africa?

Trading is not only of physical goods. It can also be affective. Africa trades its poverty. It is the poverty of Africa that brings a high proportion of its income. This peculiar kind of dependence can force Africa to remain poor in order to maintain its revenue.

'Guilt relief' is of course one of the least pressing items for trade. Should the rest of the world be beset with more serious problems (such as the 2008 financial crash), the first trading partner they will drop is the one that gives them no benefits in return except for clearing of conscience. Hence one problematic of dependence in the African case is its great vulnerability.

Why has Africa become 'dependent' in this unique way? An important foundational reason is that the African way of life does not give prosperity a physical cause. Prosperity is seen as arising as a result of 'blessing'. The receipt of such blessing may not result in increase in productivity on the part of the African people if they do not perceive that increased economic activity is correlated to increased economic prosperity.

The above paragraph may appear presumptuous. This is not something I have learned from the scholarly literature. It is a working-conclusion that I have drawn after many years of living and working in Africa, mostly in an African village with local people following their lifestyle.

2. *Access to immoral life* Much of what is 'normal' life in the West comes across as highly immoral in Africa. African people love clothes, and when they become available they like to cover their bodies. Thus a modesty in dress has developed across the Continent. Westerners often like to wear few clothes when they reach warm climes. Hence they and those who set out to imitate them appear to be immoral.

The freedom that Western women and girls have in relating to men has a similar impact. In traditional African societies the drinking of beer was carefully regulated and restricted. Youth had little access to it. The coming of money-society has made it easy for many who so desire to acquire alcohol. Disincentives to pre-marital sex, such as the damaging of the reputation of a girl who is not a virgin on marriage, have been eroded in today's Westernising culture. When money is available, televisions and radios follow in its wake. Television especially exposes young people to styles of immorality previously strictly taboo or that they had perhaps never even thought of. Then there is education. ("... higher education is the hotline that connects all the dirt of Western culture from its point of origin there to here [Kenya]. We [the educated in Kenya] are the rubbish tips of that dirt" says Mbatiah (1999:52-53). My translation.)

Without entering into the debate on absolutes in rights or wrongs, my point is that the coming of the West to African society is often perceived as an intrusion of immorality. The impact is perceived as an immoral impact. The predominance of teenage unmarried pregnancy, youth alcoholism etc. these days seems to show the same. Aid and development assistance (and unfortunately Christian mission) invariably being harbingers of the West, bring immorality in their wake.

A community's resources are usually carefully controlled in particular ways. These resources include food, houses, wives, alcohol, farmland etc. In traditional Africa (as elsewhere) old men control these for the benefit of all. Outside aid and development quickly bypasses such channels for the control of resources, thus making them available in immoral ways for immoral uses. Even should the resources pass through regular channels (i.e. through the elders) their nature and quantity is easily such as to defeat what was an effective system for control and distribution. For example, large quantities of resources of in-descript origin cause in-fighting and jealousy between elders and as well as between communities.<sup>6</sup>

3. *Perpetuation of pointless institutions and activities* Resources coming into a community earmarked for particular uses have a very complex impact on that community. A 'normal' community is largely responsible for how it uses its resources according to certain guidelines and the decision makers' comprehension of what is good, right and appropriate. Sometimes a government may intervene, be it forcefully or by propaganda, thus distorting the original set of priorities in resource use. This does relatively little damage if the government of a country is aware of people's inherent inclinations and at least to some extent representative of, locally informed about and speaking the same language as the people.

Foreign institutions involving themselves in a community through provision of tied-resources of whatever form are typically much less aware of local conditions and difficulties. The kind of scenarios that can then develop are perhaps best illustrated by taking an example of a clearly useless 'project'. Let us take as example a project of painting white spots on the backs of flies, from hereon referred to as 'spotting flies'.

Peoples initial reaction on being told of this practice, if they can control their laughter and if it is being seriously proposed, is to acknowledge its value so as to please their visitor. The visitor may encourage them to undertake spotting. He may explain that spotted flies carry less disease than un-spotted flies. People will be happy to accept this - as it is always a good thing to protect

oneself from disease and it is not good to offend a visitor. Yet after spotting a few flies, especially once the visitor have left, people may lose interest.

Per-fly payments combined with training courses on spotting methodologies will have to come from outside for the practice to continue. This will require phones, administration, secretaries, teachers, classrooms, vehicles, electricity, food provision, road construction, housing and thus craftsmen, government approval (licences) burning of bricks and other boosts to the local economy. Maintaining a fly-spotting training centre in the hope that the practice may eventually become indigenous is therefore resulting in an inflow of thousands of dollars annually into the local community. Soon the community becomes dependant on this. Then there is a tacit agreement made that no one is to speak against fly-spotting, because any interference with this new industry would spell disaster to the local economy.

Thus institutions and activities that are dependent on outside support are perpetuated and come to gain a normative existence in a society, even if the activity engaged in is totally useless - such as putting paint spots onto flies. The existence and continuity of such institutions is only extremely minimally and precariously related to any usefulness of their stated aim!

It is in this way that numerous practices these days in the Third World continue. They may be totally inappropriate, but no one will say this. They may be useless or even damaging, but unless *extremely* damaging will still continue as long as money keeps coming to support them. People's time and effort can be being invested in numerous such useless activities oriented to pleasing outsiders, so that little or none remains for truly relevant and locally useful occupations. The success of a 'project' has almost nothing to do with the desirability of its intended outcome(s)!

Much of 'education' in Africa may fall under this category. It is perpetuated - not because of its value to the local people, but because of the side benefits in it's enabling someone to link up with the international community. It then comes to be accepted as a 'ritual' with inherent 'power', much as many temple-rituals are considered around the world. The people themselves become convinced of its value, even though they do not know why, as sometimes even a perpetrator of lies may do his job so well as to be convinced by his own inventions.

*4. Idolatry of the White man* The understanding of the 'White man' is in much of Africa these days incredible. While in some ways despised or even hated for the damage he has done to people's cultures and ways of life, he is at the same time held in enormous awe and esteem. After my years of living with African people I do not always 'feel' like a White man (although looking at a mirror is a crude reminder), but I all too often come to be treated as one.

The White man is in a sense all that the African aspires but always falls short of being. He is so far 'up' as to be out of reach to most. His participation in an activity adds great respectability and power to it. Some things are considered useless without his presence. He is considered capable of building aeroplanes and being able to communicate instantaneously all around the world - the mechanics of which defeat the African people. (I don't understand them either, but that is besides the point.) He is always loaded with as much money as he wants and floats to the top of any social pile. His efforts at passing on his great powers are valiant though flawed, as many devoted Christians in Africa who despite imitating missionaries fail to reach their high echelons of wealth and grandeur, have discovered. (So there is talk of the White man's secret knowledge, that he has so far not shared with the African people.)

Every new money-intensive project (and this they all seem to be) adds to this same image. Given the holistic religions worldview of the African, the White man is worshiped like a god. This constantly perpetuated (every time a White man on the scene is shown to have money) idolatry is extremely damaging in numerous ways. Anything like 'normal relationship' between black and



White is rendered almost impossible. The powerful (but ignorant) White man is the last to hear the truth on a matter.

Africa is known to be corrupt. This state of affairs perpetuates corruption. Much money comes through the White men's hands. The continuity of the financial flow is maintained by a continual pretence or telling of half-truths. The outsider is thus in a state of enforced ignorance, so unable to make wise decisions as to resource use and allocation. This must be compensated for by local people, through the process widely known as corruption.

*5. Numerous conflicts and division* The above state of art is not conducive to unity and co-operation. Instead it constantly produces conflict and division.

The ownership of resources plus the moral right to their use are carefully defined in 'traditional' societies around the world. That which someone has acquired through their own sweat and toil is legitimately theirs. The same applies to something that is acquired or inherited through acceptable traditional avenues. Things quickly become unclear when resources come as 'aid' for 'development'.

Legitimate ownership of aid-funds is much less easy to define. Suspicions quickly arise that a beneficiary of large amounts of foreign money has used immoral means of acquisition, for example that he indicated to a donor that the aid he receives would be for everybody, but then has gone on to consume a large part of it alone.

As indicated above, access to aid money is enabled by a close association with White people. Those with a good knowledge of foreign tongues and the ability to be at ease with and socialise with Westerners are the ones who are ahead in this game. Such access being the key to unlocking the floodgates, is itself greatly coveted and even fought over. People will go to great efforts to protect 'their' White man to ensure that funds they anticipate do not end up going in the 'wrong' direction - i.e. to someone else. Little may a new visitor from the West realise just how coveted a prize he is. Conflicts over privileged access to his benevolence easily result in the destruction of what may have been along happy relationships, now replaced by extended feuds.

The patron-client system, in which many people come to be under the rule and guidance of he who has resources, continues to be very common in Africa (Maranz 2001). But today there is a question over the legitimacy of the way wealth is acquired. Division quickly results, should someone who has been a follower (i.e. other than the head of a church or other organisation) get his own funds (e.g. his own link to the West or friendship with a Whiteman). It is very likely that he will quickly pull out 'his' people, cease to respect the authority of his previous patron and become a law unto himself. (This frequently occurs in churches. For a Bishop to continue to be respected as overall leader of his church, he may need to ensure that his juniors not have direct contact with Whites. In these days of the internet and widespread knowledge of English, it is becoming more and more difficult to ensure this, thus churches are more and more liable to splitting.)

Westerners who realise that this is happening, and just how much damage is being done to local relationships through contact with the West, try to minimise the number of people who gain access to the West (and Western people). Hence the move to try and ensure that (Western) education can as far as possible be accessed outside of the West. (It is widely accepted to be better to have African people participate in theological education on the African continent in preference to their travelling to get it in a Western country such as the UK or USA.) This reluctance to send 'good men' to visit the West through fear that they thus be spoiled results in 'scarcity value' for those who do make it, meaning that they can get a heroes welcome and an enormous slice of any available financial cake, further substantiating the view that the West is really only about money. This is hardly an influence to morality.<sup>2</sup>

6. *Machine and technology graveyards* This is just one well-known side effect of the current tendency to try to promote development through aid. Recipients of resources reason that it is best on principle to say 'yes' to whatever is offered, through fear that saying 'no' may discourage the giver, which would mean a loss of the side-benefits that almost invariably arise with whatever resources are concerned, and possibly further future donations. The decision to accept machines is typically not based on any economic or rational reasoning as to their specific advantage, but a desire for spin-off benefits and an obligation to the perpetuation of aid on the part of the donor (for example, to keep the machine running).

Sometimes machines of various sorts from tractors to computers have little more than scrap value in the country of origin. Transportation may however be expensive. The distraction produced by these new devices from people's normal tasks may be great. Much frustration easily arises if those who have taken the trouble to donate find themselves responsible to pay for the upkeep and maintenance of the introduced machines, so that they do not end up lying un-repaired and idle. (Although all too often they very soon do.) The effect of imported machines is to distract and draw local people from their normal productive activities and to tie Westerners to expensive follow ups to avoid embarrassment.

### **Conclusion**

I have attempted above to point out some aspects of the immorality associated with aid practices. Some questions remain.

Why is this not more widely known? There are many reasons for this. One that I have alluded to frequently above, is that aid interventions are desired and considered beneficial by people in the Third World through their spin-off effects regardless of whether or not they 'work' as intended. It is thus hard to speak against them.

Initiatives that are taken up time and time again from the West that are supposedly in the interests of the African people have here been seen frequently to be extremely damaging to the prospects of development on the continent. The solution to these difficulties, that I have mentioned elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> lies in interventions that minimise the use of funds and western languages and are based on 'religious faith' and vulnerability and not materialist or secular ideologies of social change or development.

The saddest aspect of the whole aid/development enterprise of the last 50 years is that it has occluded all sorts of other options. The identity of the West in the third world is so strongly tied to money and Western superiority, as to dwarf and distort other aspects of international relationships such as religious exchange and the building of friendships across ethnic and international boundaries.

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## Endnotes

1. The counterfactual argument, is that which looks at what might have been had things not have been done as they were done. In terms of the provision of aid and development, what would the position of countries have been if they had not been provided with aid and development assistance. I am grateful for Deryk Belshaw for my awareness of this notion of 'the counterfactual'.

2. This could of course mean that rates of change would not have changed. i.e. If there was already a state of economic deterioration then the assumption is that this would not have been halted without the provision of the outside aid or intervention. (Base line surveys provide the foundation for future evaluations. These may be distorted to prove that progress has been made. The author has found an enormous discrepancy between official local government statistics and those found by researchers of the MDP (Millenium Development Project) in Siaya District of Kenya. Government figures give an average life expectancy in Siaya District of 52.6 years in the 2002 - 2008 year report. (Ministry nd:8) Millenium statistics in 2004 give the life expectancy in the same area as 37-43 years. (Millenium 2005:1) Has this been done so as to provide justification for the MDPs?)

3. I was in Kenya at this time and saw this happening. The Kenyan media announced that corporal punishment in schools had been declared illegal. There followed a widespread spate of extremely destructive strikes by school children up and down the country. To my understanding, corporal punishment has been re-continued. Hence we have yet another example of the separation of the legal system from practice, for the sake of the continued acquisition of foreign aid. Corporal punishment is declared illegal in Kenya so as to please foreign donors, but continues unabated in many schools, so as to prevent chaos.

4. The child sponsorship schemes often focus strongly on providing children with education. The education that is provided is invariably rooted in foreign languages and countries, so is hard for local children in Africa to understand. They are only likely to benefit from it through corruption or by coming to be employed in the formal or international sector. Mushrooming education may leave its students frustrated, if there are only the same numbers of jobs available in the international sector. A sponsored child has two options. Either to despise his own people, or to wonder why someone has paid for him/her to be brought up in a way that gives false hope. What other parent rears a child and then says 'don't ever come near my home'?

5. Nearly every white man who goes to Africa these days seems to do so with the intention of spending money. This makes it extremely difficult for someone not intent on spending money to be understood or valued in any other role.

6. I am here suggesting that all money is not equal. Finance and aid that has come from outside of one's community is perceived and understood differently from funds generated from the inside. Someone who makes \$1000 through his own sweat and toil or through traditional means is considered to have obtained this finance legitimately. Someone who receives it from a foreign donor is immediately suspected of having lied to the donor, and is in the possession of funds that are not truly rightfully his and are therefore 'up for grabs'.

7. I am here referring to those African people who do manage to get to visit and be welcomed to Western nations. The reluctance of people to send Africans from Africa to the west, means that the few who do arrive have a scarcity value that increases the prospects of their self enrichment. In some Western people's view these few are the key one's that Western Christians should work with! (For example see Finley 2005.) Indeed whoever makes a decision to send an African person to the West is like a distributor of the crown jewels.

8. See for example *Jim's Journal*, December 2002.

<http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/journal/index.html>

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**The following is a (part) record of the discussion that occurred following the presentation of this paper at the EMS (Evangelical Missiological Society) conference on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2009.**

**Questioner:** *Do africans have a concept of "investment?"*

**Fred Lewis:** Saving your seeds for next year perhaps...that's about it. No, not really. Some of what Jim says sounds extreme, even to my ears. It can sound like 'do nothing'. When you are so wealthy, you do need to do something. ... but what?

**Somebody:** Does Jim get into safeguards and solutions?

**Fred:** No. Not in this paper.

**Beth Snoddersley:** He does in many articles on his website.

**Lisa:** And now he has a list-serve, so there is continual daily dialogue going on now, with others, not just people related to AVM. So there are solutions, and also more questions being discussed

all the time, and people from a number of different places in the world are providing real examples from their own ministries, and it's very interesting. See me if you're interested.

**Fred:** A major difficulty I had as a missionary, was having outside organizations that come in with ready-made solutions.

**Somebody:** What does Jim do, if he's doesn't accept outside aid?

**Fred:** He's an instructor at two theological institutions, and he doesn't work in the village....he goes away from where he lives.

**Someone else:** I think he also has somewhat of an orphanage in his home, takes in local orphans, as a single guy.

**Someone else:** Most of us, if you've spent any time on the mission field, know all these problems exist, but also know it sure doesn't help to tell the donor base. They just don't understand.

**Someone else:** Interdependence and sharing is a biblical concept vs self reliance.

**Another question to Fred:** What do you think the best practices are regarding aid, and what about the paper would you have not agreed to?

**Fred:** Didn't like the parable about fly spotting. Needed a real life example. Also, equality is a western value. I thought he was off, there, at least with the people we worked with.

**Comment from audience:** Maybe not equality, but issue of respect. Different in different cultures, respect is expressed in other ways in other cultures.

**Larry Dinkins:** When we were in Cambodia, I was overwhelmed with how much all mission structure depended on outside influences. If something should happen, if they would have to leave, there would be a major collapse.

**Someone else:** How would aid compare to tourism...there's always something bringing money in.

**Fred:** Well, I certainly didn't live in a touristy area in Uganda, and I seriously doubt if Jim's village is anywhere near a touristy area, but I really don't know what it's like where he lives.