



## Helping Can be Tricky

Written by Colin Scott, Director of Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA), International Community Development programme of Global Mission Partners (GMP). First published in GMP's *In Partnership* Newsletter.



[www.gmp.org.au](http://www.gmp.org.au)





Cover Image & Above: A2 Borehole, Zimbabwe

## In This Series

This series explores the way's 'helping can be tricky' when we engage with issues of poverty and community development. It covers some of the complexities we face when learning and taking action to help others overseas. The series covers the following topics:

### **Volunteer + Tourism = Voluntourism**

While the idea of visiting a children's home sounds good, at best it teaches children that attachments are short term.

### **Posting Big Parcels: Gifts of Unrequested Goods**

A generous response is exactly what is needed in an emergency, and in the ongoing emergency of poverty across the world, but sending unrequested goods has its downsides...

### **Giving Till It Hurts – Welfare**

Often welfare responds to an obvious need by filling the gap, but it doesn't have a long-term strategy to fix the problem. The more a welfare program continues, the more dependent the community becomes.

### **Orphanages and Alternative Care**

This story illustrates how orphanages can pull families apart unknowingly, and secondly, that even when there is absolutely wonderful care, there is nothing like being part of a family.

### **Modern Slavery**

Twenty-one million people, 55% of them women, are trapped in the kinds of slavery listed in this article. It is marginalised people that are most susceptible to slavery.

### **Helping Can Be Tricky**

Humility, compassion and treating others as our equals, is critical. That is why partnership is so important to GMP. In this article we look at five issues that can make helping tricky.

### **When Helping Hurts: Inequality**

While poverty went down overall, it did not go down evenly. In fact, over the same period inequality increased significantly. This includes inequality between countries, within countries, and between individuals globally.

### **God is Fixing All of Us**

Recognising that we are all broken brings humility to our work amongst the poor. It is not us and God fixing them, but God fixing all of us.

### **Visiting Friends and Doing Mission at the Same Time**

Sometimes mission starts with a bucket of cash or resources to be sent to those in need. Sometimes we set off with an empty bucket, to bring back new experiences. Why not turn the bucket upside down, place it in the dust and sit beside your neighbour?

### **Helping Can Be Tricky: Oversimplification**

The problem of Poverty does not have a simple solution. There are multiple and interrelated causes. Band Aid and Live Aid were fantastic initiatives, which changed attitudes and saved lives, but they weren't a complete solution.

### **The Saviour Complex**

People look up to a saviour. It is a great feeling to visit poor communities and feel some sense of reverence and importance, but this too can lead us down the path of serving ourselves and not others. Recognising the true Saviour of the world, as our own saviour, and the saviour of anyone we reach out to, is the only correction for a 'saviour complex.'



Young people playing sport at Khayelihle Children's Village (KCV),

## Volunteer + Tourism = Voluntourism

*Cathy and Mike were excited about their holiday in Asia. As well as cheap everything, they had booked a tour of a children's home where they would volunteer for a day. They liked the idea of giving something to the country that they were visiting. They knew it was a pretty poor place.*

*They had a great time at their day at the children's home. The kids gave them a wonderful welcome, with bright coloured flowers and enthusiastic singing and dancing. Some of it was even in English. They played games with the children and helped to serve lunch. The director told them stories about the kind of conditions that the children came from. They took the opportunity to sign up for a regular donation as they left.*

*A few days later, on their cycling tour, Cathy was sure that she saw one of the kids from the home helping her mum slice and dry bananas. Mike read a fact sheet about child sex trafficking in the hotel room. They felt increasingly uncomfortable about their trip to the children's home.*

The place that Cathy and Mike visited may have been ok, but there are an increasing number that are not. UNICEF estimates that between 2010 there was a 75 percent increase in the number of residential

care facilities in Cambodia, doubling the number of children in this type of facility. While the idea of visiting a children's home sounds good, at best it teaches children that attachments are short term. At the worst, children's homes can facilitate the trafficking (generally for sex) of the children that they are supposed to be caring for. Most often funds help the operators of the home more than they do the children. Children are sometimes brought in from the community for the days that tourists visit to make the home look fuller than it really is.

In countries such as Cambodia, Timor Leste, Uganda, Nepal, India and Myanmar, a significant proportion of the country's child welfare and child protection services are privately funded by overseas donors. Often children's services in these parts of the world are poorly regulated and government corruption is significant so there is ample opportunity for unscrupulous operators to line their own pockets at the expense of poor children.

Global Mission Partners does not facilitate voluntourism and is working hard to ensure that the needs of children are prioritised above those of any visitors. Partner Visit teams are briefed about voluntourism and appropriate ways to interact with children. GMP has long-standing

relationships with a number of children's facilities: Khayelihle Childrens Village (KCV) in Zimbabwe, Rwangchary and Bandarban Hostels in Bangladesh, and Hosanna, Baramati and Shrigonda homes in India. We have worked with each of these to develop appropriate child protection policies. We are currently working with KCV, shifting the focus to reconnecting children with relatives and supporting those families.

We have also published a fact sheet, which you can access here:

### **CHILDREN FAMILIES AND ALTERNATE CARE**

The Smart Volunteering campaign, launched by the Australian Government Department of Foreign affairs and Trade, is a great resource to help you be an informed volunteer, a child safe volunteer and a prepared volunteer.

### **SMART VOLUNTEERING BROCHURE**

*Colin Scott,*  
COCOA Director





Left: Thembe buying undies for the kids



Right: Happy KCV kids with new undies!

## Posting Big Parcels: Gifts of Unrequested Goods

In 2012, staff at the Fresh Hope office (Churches of Christ in NSW) decided to help Khayelihle Children's Village (KCV) in Zimbabwe. They asked what the current need was and the reply came back – new underwear for all of the children. They set about raising money with a donation jar in the lunchroom and a competition decorating cardboard cutout undies. The idea was to ship over a big load of undies in a variety of sizes. However, some research brought that idea to a halt. The transport and import fees were going to outstrip the value of the underwear. Taking that amount of underwear in your luggage would also mean you would be stopped at the customs gate.

Research shows that Australians are generous people who like to respond in practical ways – like the undies project (codenamed 'Easter Bloomers'!). In 2015, after Cyclone Pam, 70 shipping containers arrived in Vanuatu. Unfortunately, they clogged crucial wharf space, keeping out much needed supplies and costing locals at least two million Australian dollars. A generous response is exactly what is needed in an emergency, and in the ongoing emergency of poverty across the world, but sending unrequested goods has its downsides:

- They are not targeted at the specific needs of communities, which in an emergency situation can change rapidly. Only people on the ground can make good decisions about what is needed;

- They clog emergency supply chains. Local government and communities bear this cost, both in dollars and in time lost, and
- They often arrive too late to be useful. They take up the time of aid workers and local people who are working on the next stage.

All up unrequested goods are slow and wasteful. This is true outside of emergency situations as well. The toy car or socks that we lovingly put in a box for someone overseas may make no sense to someone who always goes barefoot. Local people can make much better decisions about what a great gift looks like.

Sending money enables trusted organisations on the ground to make the critical decisions about what is needed:

- Money gets there quickly and can be directed toward energy or water supply, or life-saving medicine – whatever is most needed;
- Money can be redirected if there is excess. It never goes to landfill;
- Money doesn't create the additional burden of sorting for the recipients, and
- Money helps revitalise the local economy so that things return to normal more quickly.

Part of GMP's support to people affected by the Ambae volcano

eruption was through providing vouchers for two local shops. This meant people could buy exactly what they needed, the shops could use their established supply chains, and the vouchers helped rebuild their business more quickly. We also discourage and restrict sending gifts to sponsor children overseas. This avoids giving inappropriate things (because we make our decisions based on Australian culture, rather than the recipient's culture). It also reduces the potential of jealousy from those who do not receive gifts.

At GMP we know the locals, and we let the people decide what is best for them. The Easter Bloomers project had a happy ending. A small group decided to make a partner visit to KCV. They used the money raised to go shopping with KCV staff and with the older girls. Everyone got what they wanted – size and style – and could bloom all the more knowing that their extended family in Australia cared enough to listen to them above their own ideas.

PS: There was money left over so they purchased some shoes as well!  
No landfill!

*Colin Scott,*  
COCOA Director



## Giving Till It Hurts – Welfare

*The inhabitants of a certain island were great lovers of fish. They were poor, so they cried out to their neighbours across the sea for help. The first thing they received was a pallet of canned tuna, the second was a pallet of canned tuna, and the third was a pallet of canned tuna.*

*The neighbours worked hard to raise money to send the pallet each month. The fish lovers loved the tuna. They soon learned what time the next pallet was due to arrive. The neighbours came and visited the island and the two communities enjoyed each other's company immensely, sharing tuna served in every conceivable way. It was a great relationship for both of them. Both sides felt good about it and wanted it to go on forever.*

*As time went on they both needed it to go on forever – the fish lovers because they knew no other way to get the fish they needed, and their neighbours because they understood the dependency and it was good to feel needed.*

The help that their neighbours are providing to the fish-loving folk is often called welfare. It responds to an obvious need by filling the gap, but it doesn't have a long-term strategy to fix the problem. The more a welfare program continues, the more dependent the community becomes.

The neighbours did not want to unsettle the great relationship, but some of them had a niggling feeling that they could be doing better for their friends on the island. Perhaps a sustainable project was not just one they could keep up the payments for, but one which helped the islanders do more for themselves – that made their life more sustainable.

*Colin Scott,  
COCOA Director*





Sippo, Luwani and their brother\*

## Orphanages and Alternative Care

When Onotu\* lost her husband she was in despair about how to care for her children. With no one to earn money for the family she couldn't see how she could keep her children at school. Then she had an idea. Painful as it was, she left them at the police station and snuck away. As she had hoped, a nearby orphanage took them in, giving them food and clothes and making sure that they went to school.

When Luwani's parents died she and her two younger brothers found their way to a local orphanage. They enjoyed their time there immensely. There were lots of friends, enough food and they went to school every day in uniform. As Luwani was finishing high school, the orphanage started a programme to reconnect the children to their families. They found her uncle and he wanted the three siblings to come and live with his family. With some support in the transition, they went to live with their uncle's family. I met Luwani and her brothers just this week. She said, "It's amazing to be part of a family!" Sippo, her youngest brother said, "We are a family!"

We have changed the names, but both of these stories are true; and from Khayelihle Children's Village (KCV) in Zimbabwe. They illustrate two facts about orphanages. Firstly, orphanages can pull families apart unknowingly, and secondly, that even when there is absolutely wonderful care, there is nothing like being part of a family.

There is a lot of research to back up these two facts and organisations like KCV are moving to a model sometimes called Alternative Care. The goal is no longer to care for children until they are 18, but to find the most family-like situation that is safe and supportive for them. The first priority is restoration to their nuclear family, then reconnection with their extended family, then adoption and fostering and finally residential care organised in family groups.

Over the last four years KCV has reconnected nearly half of the 100 children that it had. The process takes time, and families and the children need support, both practical and emotional, in

the transition. Low incomes are a constant, and KCV has responded with a small livelihoods programme to help families earn a bit more money to support their enlarged families. Luwani's family, for example, has started growing a particularly tasty breed of chickens – well worth the \$10 asking price, if you get a chance to try one!

GMP has a fact sheet on alternative care:

### ALTERNATIVE CARE FACT SHEET

Colin Scott, COCOA Director

*\* The names in this article have been changed to protect the safety and privacy of our partner communities*



Liberated slaves in Aweil, South Sudan

## Modern Slavery

Aziz heard that his school would be closed for the month. His school, like many others in Uzbekistan, was closed so that the children could work in the fields picking cotton – for no wages, for the government, and in appalling conditions. Aziz knew what he would be doing, but he didn't know how to stop it. In Cambodia, a young girl named Chamroeun, gets off the bus in the city. Instantly she is bundled into a building. Rather than the promise of vocational school, Chamroeun finds herself trapped in the sex trade. The prosperity that her parents wanted for her was a fantasy.

Both Aziz and Chamroeun were involved in modern forms of slavery. As well as labour and sexual exploitation, modern slavery includes domestic servants who get paid little and have their freedom limited; forced marriage; being forced into a crimes like pick-pocketing or carrying drugs; child soldiers, and organ harvesting. Twenty-one million people, 55% of them women, are trapped in the kinds of slavery listed above. It is marginalised people that are most susceptible to slavery.

In 2012, I met a group of women in Aweil, South Sudan, who were liberated slaves. Most had a young child from their forced marriage. It was a moment of denial – this

couldn't be happening, this couldn't be true, I thought – but it was right there in front of me. As people who believe that people are made in the image of God, we need to work to support the victims and challenge the powers that enslave them.

If you notice a situation where you think someone may be enslaved, you can report it to the police. Telltale signs are:

- Awkward behaviour as if someone else is controlling their behaviour;
- Signs of abuse, such as lack of self-esteem, anxiety, bruising or untreated wounds;
- Always short of money;
- Little contact with family, and
- Not in possession of their own legal documents.

You can also report to:

**STOP THE TRAFFIK**

([www.stopthetraffik.org/share-information](http://www.stopthetraffik.org/share-information)) who can give you more guidance about what to do.

You can join with others to challenge

the systems that benefit from slavery. In 2013, GMP was involved in a campaign to stop children, like Aziz, being forced to work in the cotton fields. Cotton from Uzbekistan was traced to Australia in products made by Rivers. Along with many others, GMP supporters wrote cards and letters to Rivers, asking them to guarantee that their cotton was not harvested with child labour. After a time, Rivers responded, and children like Aziz were freed to focus on their schooling.

In 2017, GMP invited supporters to give their input on the Modern Slavery Act being debated in Federal Parliament. GMP continues to work with the Stop the Traffik campaign to highlight the issue of modern slavery and give people options to fight against it. Join with us to challenge the systems that benefit from slavery. Further resources can be found on the GMP and Stop the Traffik websites.

*Colin Scott,*  
COCOA Director





Emmanuel School students with Paulino Malou Bol Jok & Colin Scott

# Helping Can Be Tricky

Playing with orphaned kids when I'm on holidays, or sending practical supplies, sending quick fix help, welfare, voluntourism, unrequested gifts in kind, and thinking that slavery is over... there are lots of ways that trying to help others can be tricky. You might say, "But God has called us to help people! Is God trying us, by making it complicated?" I don't think so. As in everything, God is most concerned with the attitude of our hearts when we try to help others. Humility, compassion and treating others as our equals, is critical. That is why partnership is so important to GMP.

Partnership recognises that we, and those we seek to help, are equals. We both have something to give and to receive. Ask anyone who has visited a GMP partner and they will tell you their story of receiving more than they gave! This is the way God has constructed the world. As we give to others we grow more into the people we were intended to be, and understand more of God's generosity (Mark 8:35). Old attitudes like "beggars can't be choosers" fade away. This is a medieval idea anyway, and certainly not a Christian one. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," (Luke 6:31) begins to reign in our heart and actions.

A good attitude will mean that we ask questions when we work through a development organisation or a mission agency. How do they relate to the people that they help?

What is their model of helping? What are the risks and opportunities? For Australian development organisations, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) sets high standards of practice for its members. Checking whether an organisation is a member is a great first step, to ensure that your gift is being used well. By the way, GMP is a member of ACFID!

So far this year, we have looked at five issues that can make helping tricky. We have five to go, so below is a little half-time quiz to see if it is making sense so far. Just tick the items that you think are good practice and cross out the ones which you think are not so good:

- Don't suggest new ways of doing things until you understand what is behind the current local practice;
- Only give money, and don't find out who you are helping and how;
- Be sensitive to the way the organisation or agency talks about the people it helps;
- Give people stuff that makes them look to you for more;
- Give to the needs that you see without asking anyone local for the big picture;
- Check out the organisation's or agency's website;

- Give so you can get your photo taken putting a smile on someone else's face;
- Take time to think about where your gift can have the most impact;
- Use an agency that you don't know anything about, and join a trip to meet some partners face-to-face.

ANSWERS HERE:

## DO'S AND DON'T'S OF MISSION

*Colin Scott,*  
COCOA Director



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT





# When Helping Hurts: Inequality

Between 1990 and 2015, the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty (less than USD\$1.90 per day) was achieved. Extreme poverty went from 1,926 million to 836 million people – amazing! Over a similar period (1981-2010) poverty in China reduced dramatically (835 million to 156 million people) and in India significantly (429 million to 361 million). These are fantastic results, but they are not the whole story.

While poverty went down overall, it did not go down evenly. In fact, over the same period inequality increased significantly. This includes inequality between countries, within countries, and between individuals globally.

1. While poverty decreased in China and India, in sub-Saharan Africa it doubled (205 million to 414 million people between 1981-2010).
2. In Vietnam, the country's richest man earns more in a day than the poorest person earns in 10 years. This sort of statistic is not uncommon in many countries.
3. A FTSE-100 CEO earns as much in a year as 10,000 people in working in garment factories in Bangladesh. Six people hold as much wealth as the bottom 3.5 billion people.

Unfortunately, these gaps are getting bigger not smaller. In the

US, new research by economist Thomas Piketty shows that over the last 30 years the growth in the incomes of the bottom 50% has been zero, whereas the incomes of the top 1% have grown 300%.

Now at some level we are a bit accustomed to inequality. Not everyone has the same resources or skills, so not everyone will have the same sized mansion right? There is also the idea that some level of inequality is needed to drive our economy. The reality, however, is that inequality destabilises our society. In countries and communities where inequality is high, every negative social indicator (such as crime, drug use, mental illness or early pregnancy) is also correspondingly high.

## Why is this so?

Since such a small percentage of people control the bulk of the resources, it is a small percentage of people who decide how those resources are distributed. Inevitably, they distribute wealth to favour themselves. Over the last 25 years, the top 1% have gained more income than the bottom 50% put together. This is good old biblical greed (Prov 29:4). The World Economic Forum and the World Bank have recognised the biblical imperative that prosperity doesn't just need to be generated, it needs to be shared equitably (Amos 8:4-6). Modern economics

haven't done that very well. We need a biblical way of sharing the wealth of God's good earth!

## What can we do?

Here is some reading so you can better understand the situation and start to change things.

### A good take on the global situation:

[www.oxfam.org/en/research/economy-99](http://www.oxfam.org/en/research/economy-99)

### As local as your lounge room:

[baptistworldaid.org.au/resources/the-end-of-greed/](http://baptistworldaid.org.au/resources/the-end-of-greed/)

Colin Scott,  
COCOA Director

## Sources:

[www.oxfam.org/en/research/economy-99](http://www.oxfam.org/en/research/economy-99)

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/an-economy-for-the-99-its-time-to-build-a-human-economy-that-benefits-everyone-620170>; [Wilkinson, R and Pickett, K, The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better. London, Allen Lane, 5 March 2009.](#)



The chief, School Principal, and other leaders in Rupemba.

## God is Fixing All of Us

The water in the Ngezi River at Rupemba, Zimbabwe, was never good. Crocodiles made fetching water from it a dangerous chore, and many animals drank and muddied the water there. It got worse when people came seeking gold. The chemicals they used made the water toxic. So everyone was happy when Showers of Blessing Trust came along and sank several boreholes and clean, fresh water sprang up in abundance. Life changed considerably. The risk of water-borne disease was almost gone. The future of the school was secure. It was worth planting market gardens and building better houses.

The people of Rupemba noticed something else. The team who brought the borehole had something – something that contrasted with the careless values of the gold miners that their children were exposed to. They knew Showers of Blessing was a church group so they figured a church was what they needed. The Associated Churches of Christ in Zimbabwe responded quickly with an evangelist who came to talk about a relationship with Jesus, and soon a church was established.

It doesn't always happen like this, but this story is a reminder that challenging poverty is not just about improving people's health or wealth. Poor people are just like us, broken in many dimensions: broken in our relationship with God, with others, with ourselves and with creation.

Recognising that we are all broken brings humility to our work amongst the poor. It is not us and God fixing them, but God fixing all of us.

At Nanga, there is still no borehole. The Showers of Blessing team came but the community was in such conflict there was no point in giving them something else to fight over. The borehole would have improved their relationship with creation – they would have received the water that they needed – but the brokenness of their relationships with one another got in the way.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Colossians 1:19).

God is reconciling all things to himself through Jesus. God was concerned that people at Rupemba didn't have clean water, and concerned that they were not close to him.

Sometimes development sees the former and not the latter. Encouragingly, there is increasing recognition of spirituality as a key component in development. The Australian government's focus on working through the church networks in PNG and Vanuatu is just one example of this.

Sometimes evangelism sees only the latter and not the former. But Colossians reminds us that God is reconciling everything – not just souls – but everything. Encouragingly, the Lausanne Covenant and the Micah Declaration at the end of the 20th Century brought this perspective back into the mainstream of Christian thinking.

For GMP it makes perfect sense that people need reconciliation in all of their relationships. That's why we work through Christian partners. That's why we have a development program – Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) and an evangelism program – International Church Partnerships (ICP) – which work together, and why our Indigenous Ministries Australia (IMA) program has both church and community aspects.

Along with our partners, the poor communities that they work amongst, and the whole of creation (Rom 8:21) we look forward to the reconciliation of all things – not being beamed up to a choir seat in heaven – but seeing relationships put right in every direction.

*Colin Scott,*  
COCOA Director





Jenny from Nowra Church of Christ, shares icecream with Pastor Raj and Nirmala in Fiji

## Visiting Friends and Doing Mission at the Same Time

Sometimes mission starts with a bucket of cash or resources to be sent to those in need. Sometimes we set off with an empty bucket, to bring back new experiences. Why not turn the bucket upside down, place it in the dust and sit beside your neighbour?

Giving away resources? Collecting experiences? Sitting in the dust? What is mission about? Particularly short trips from Australia?

A short while ago we had a long discussion at GMP about 'Short Term Mission Trips', as they were called. Some of us were uneasy about the name because it could suggest that:

1. Mission is a short-term endeavor.
2. That the Australians on the trip would do the mission to those they met.

With our emphasis at GMP on partnership, the suggestion of an uneven relationship just didn't fit. Eventually we came up with 'Partner Visits'. The emphasis here was that the team going was visiting a church or project where there were people who had equal standing with the team. Indeed, they were a group that the visitors were already in partnership with across the sea, even before the visit began, because

they had been already talking and praying together. They were visiting people who they were in partnership with on God's mission, the long-term project of reconciling all things to God in Jesus.

Maybe we were over sensitive about semantics – but better sensitive than sloppy.

As I travel to visit our partners I often see the impact of the way communities have been treated badly by visitors in the past. Visitors who did not see them as equals, visitors who took their land or other resources, drew country borders across their tribal boundaries and insisted that their way of doing things was superior. Sometimes the work of development is undoing the impact of these visits (many of which were not short term!). As we have said often in these articles, our helping must always begin, and major on, a relationship of respect – where we may come to help and contribute, but also expect to learn and gain in the process, trusting that our partner will do the same. That is a partnership.

If we go on a Partnership Visit we go expecting to deepen the relationship that we have in the gospel. We go expecting to meet someone who is seeking to follow Jesus just like we are, and who we can encourage

and be encouraged by. We go to share the resources that God has given us and to learn new things. We go to help out with whatever part of God's mission our friends are involved in at the moment. This is not a 'short-term' mission. God has been working on it since creation! Our role is not so much doing the mission, as joining our partners and God in God's mission.

As Australians we have a bucket-load of cash and resources that we should be sharing with those in need and there are many new experiences amongst our partners that we can be enriched by, but these things need to stem from a posture of partnership, where we sit beside our neighbours in the dust together.

Colin Scott,  
COCOA Director



Sometimes mission starts with a bucket of cash or resources to be sent to those in need.



Sometimes we set off with an empty bucket, to bring back new experiences.



Why not turn the bucket upside down, place it in the dust and sit beside your neighbour?



Goats changing lives in South Sudan

## Helping Can Be Tricky: Oversimplification

Malla Awa was two-years-old when a food crisis swept through his country of Niger and six others in the region. Sporadic rain was to blame, coupled with soaring grain prices and chronic poverty. At age two, there were a lot of things that Malla couldn't do much about. His mother, Mariama, didn't have a lot of options either. There was no hospital in their town, but NGO intervention made a makeshift 'ambulance' available, which carried him 160km to a special hospital where his life was saved.

In an article reporting on Malla's story and that particular food crisis (Why does Africa always have food crises?) the author, Matt Wade, reflects that, "Nearly three decades ago Band Aid and Live Aid aimed to bring an end to African hunger" (Matt Wade, This Child Deserves a Future, Sydney Morning Herald, Weekend Edition, May 26-27, 2012). The article is from 2012 but it could have been written last year.

Why didn't Live Aid bring an end to African hunger? We can understand sporadic rain being responsible for a food crisis, but why are the grain prices soaring and where did the chronic poverty come from in the first place? Why isn't there a government hospital in Malla's home town?

The answers run as wide as the political issues in Niger and the region, to colonialism and the modern grain market, indeed to the global market and the choices of Western consumers, companies and governments – to name a few. It turns out there are some things you can do about sporadic rain. In the end that may be the simplest cause to tackle.

The point is that Malla's situation, like every situation of poverty, does not have a simple solution. There are multiple and interrelated causes. Band Aid and Live Aid were fantastic initiatives, which changed attitudes and saved lives, but they weren't a complete solution.

### So what does this mean?

1. We need to recognise that any intervention we make (even Band Aid) will tackle part of the problem of poverty but it won't be a complete solution. At COCOA, we will do our best with your next donation, but we will need another one after it, and again after that as well.
2. Be wary of organisations that say they have the complete solution. They are overstating their case. If there was one complete earthly solution we would have solved poverty by now.

3. Recognise that people in poverty are part of multiple interrelated systems. We are unlikely to change all of the causes that make them poor. COCOA, along with many NGOs, is analysing the systems that communities are part of to try to find the interventions that might make the biggest change. Goats for families at Emmanuel School in South Sudan, for example, have the potential to get children through high school, not just through this year of primary school. System analysis makes our interventions potentially more effective but they are still not a complete solution.

4. Recognise that the world will not be complete until God's Kingdom has completely come. Poverty is a symptom of wrong relationships - the wrong relationships that Christ came to put right. The poor therefore wait for the reconciliation of all things with an anticipation that the rest of us do not know.

*Colin Scott,*  
COCOA Director





## The Saviour Complex

“We should do what Jesus did,” said one member of the Bible study group. Heads nodded all around the circle. “Does that mean we should die on a cross?” Well... it took a good deal more discussion before everyone thought through what it meant to be like the Saviour of the world without being the Saviour of the world.

In the book, *When Helping Hurts\**, Jayakumar Christian, CEO of World Vision India, argues that the economically rich have ‘god-complexes’, a subtle and unconscious sense of superiority in which they believe that they have achieved their wealth through their own efforts and that they have been anointed to decide what is best for low-income people, whom they view as inferior to themselves. You can feel some of the impact of being on the receiving end of Western ‘god-complexes’ in Christian’s words. Try thinking about yourself dying on a cross for the sins of the world for a minute – just to give you an idea about the dangers of a saviour complex in helping the poor.

For starters you would not be effective – you wouldn’t have the sinless life or the anointing from God to back it up. Your solution for the community would not be as perfect as you think it is. Next up, you may realise that your sacrificial actions

are more for your own benefit than for the community. Sacrificing yourself and being involved makes you feel good and important – like you have real purpose in your life. There’s nothing wrong with feeling good about yourself, but if that takes over from serving people, then you aren’t helping anyone but yourself.

People look up to a saviour. It is a great feeling to visit poor communities and feel some sense of reverence and importance, but this too can lead us down the path of serving ourselves and not others. People rely on saviours and we are often motivated by the need of those in poverty. So if it becomes about our need to be needed or we work in a way that doesn’t help people out of their need, we are hurting instead of helping.

### **A story from *When Helping Hurts\**:**

Creekside Community Church reached out to a nearby public housing community, delivering toys each Christmas. After a few years, volunteers were hard to find. They were disillusioned because the people they were helping were still as poor and dependent as when they started the program. Also the deliverers noticed that there were few men in the houses they delivered to. Later they found out

that the men often made themselves scarce when the delivery came because they were embarrassed that they couldn’t provide Christmas toys for their own children. Creekside’s strategy, developed from a sense of being the saviour of the public housing community, didn’t help people out of poverty. It only made them feel worse (in the case of the men anyway) about the difficult situation that they were in.

At GMP one thing we do to try to get our eyes off ourselves is keep out of photos. If you look at GMP publicity there are very few photos with GMP staff or other Australians alongside our overseas or Indigenous partners. The absence of the helpers in the photos is intentional. It stops us congratulating ourselves and draws the focus toward our partners and the participants in their projects. And we hope too, that it draws attention to the one who is really working the miracles in our lives and in theirs.

Recognising the true Saviour of the world, as our own saviour, and the saviour of anyone we reach out to, is the only correction for a ‘saviour complex’ or any other distorted view of ourselves (Hebrews 12:2).

*Colin Scott,*  
COCOA Director

\* Corbett, Steve & Fikkert, Brian 2012, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor and Yourself*, Moody Publishers, Chicago.



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