

Faith in Action

FIFTH: Equipment should be bought locally.

We only provide resources that are purchased locally. In this way spare parts can be bought easily, and the technology is available to maintain each project.

When purchases are made outside the recipient country, foreign currency is rarely available to buy spare parts, and these have to be provided by donors, producing long-term donor-dependence. And when continued funding from abroad is not available, the project will fall into a state of disrepair.



We provide resources what are purchased locally. Our wells use Afridev pumps, the parts for which can be purchased in local markets.

SIXTH: Showing benefits of projects.

The potential benefits of each project needs to be clearly explained. For example, if we provide a high-yielding crop, we should clarify what the yields for this crop should be. If we fail to do this, beneficiaries will accept less, without making any effort to change farming methods in order to achieve the full benefits.

SEVENTH: Building hope.

When families and communities have faced years of poverty and hardship, this can result in a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. And as a result they find it difficult to believe that they can stand on their own feet. And this lack of hope means that projects will often fail, because people expect them to fail.

One common way that we fail to build hope and self-confidence in the lives of beneficiaries, is through donors presuming to lead, organise and/or run each project. This may be well-intended, but it undermines their valuable skills, and communicates that they are not able to do this for themselves. In direct contrast, God gives us the freedom to learn through

making mistakes, and we should extend this same freedom and trust to others. It may take longer to see positive results, but these results will ultimately be greater and more long-lasting.

It is for this reason that we do not take a leadership position in any of our projects, although we do monitor their progress and check that there are no problems which need rectifying.

EIGHTH: Encouraging re-investment.

It is also important to teach beneficiaries about re-investment. African culture tends to spend, use, or give away what they have. They are extravagantly generous to each other and visitors, and rarely put money aside for future use or benefit. And thus they often fail to gain the maximum benefit from the projects that they receive.

For example, we provide goats for families who foster orphaned children. If they sell all the kids that these goats produce, they will gain about £160 each year from this project. However, if they keep just one of these kids each year, in order to increase their breeding females, and thus to re-invest in their project, their yearly income after 10 years could be £860.

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We should add that not all these strategies can be applied to every project. For example, a project must produce an income for it to be provided as a loan. But we seek to apply these strategies where they are appropriate. And as a result, we are seeing some really significant and long-term benefits for families and communities.

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Can we make Poverty History?

Most of us will remember the promise that was used in advertising a few years ago: The promise that we could “Make Poverty History”. However, with the enormous sums of money that have been poured into Africa for so long, and the comparative lack of positive results that we can actually see, we could well question whether fulfilling this promise is really possible. Can we ever really bring a complete end to Poverty?

If we are to take this question literally, I believe that the answer is NO. I personally do not believe that we can ever completely eradicate poverty, and therefore this promise is a false one. Jesus Himself said: You will have the poor with you always. However, I DO believe that we can make a significant and long-term positive difference, but only if we recognise that giving money alone, will not bring a long-term solution to poverty.



We travel regularly to Malawi, and stay with church leaders and pastors in villages during these visits.

Working in Partnership
with the Church in Africa

The reason that I say this, is because the causes of poverty are numerous and complex. It is not only brought about by a lack of resources, but a variety of other issues such as lack of information and training, and a mindset of despair and defeat.

We have also found that because so much funding has been provided in a way that builds donor-dependence, there is now an unrealistic expectation for continued funding, and limited motivation to make the most of the funds received. And thus, projects often fail because there is no long-term motivation and vision.

If we are to eradicate poverty, we therefore need to deal with all its causes, not just the financial one; and it is essential that we adopt strategies which deal with poverty from a wider perspective. We should also adopt strategies which encourage long-term benefits from the funds given, and set up projects so that they do not rely upon on-going investment from abroad.

SUMMARY OF OUR CURRENT STRATEGIES:

[Some of these strategies over-lap with each other.]

FIRST: Working in Partnership:

This first strategy is important because it is essential to establish a partnership with beneficiaries, in order to put most of our other strategies in place.

The essential ingredients of true partnership is first of all equality, second relationship, and third openness and honesty. And these will require humility, time and commitment to establish. Building relationship is essential because we can only trust people that we know, and it only when trust is built, that open and honest dialogue can take place. Trust also enables others to listen to, and to act upon, the recommendations that we make; and I will share later why this is so important.

SECOND: Identifying with Beneficiaries:

It is difficult to help others if we do not understand the circumstances, problems and limitations that they face. And in order to identify with them in some measure, we stay with Malawian church leaders when we visit Ma-

lawi, and eat and sleep in their mud and thatch houses when we visit the rural areas. We also have regular conferences in Malawi in which we spend considerable time discussing our projects, as well as suggesting new ones. Everyone is encouraged to participate in these discussions, and thus we work together as a close-knit team, all pulling in the same direction.



Malawian Pastors attending first Conference in Blantyre.

THIRD: Establishing ownership of projects.

Beneficiaries will only gain long-term benefits from projects if they own them. If they do not own them, beneficiaries will expect donors to maintain and repair them. And this means that projects will only last as long as donors are available to keep them up and running.

There are at least three ways that we can encourage beneficiaries to own projects: First, we should never impose projects on others, but only provide for those which are really wanted. No-one will maintain something well that they did not choose to have.

Second, where possible, we provide funds for projects as loans. If people pay back the money that they have received, they feel that the project is really theirs. In this way, the projects are also multiplied.

Third, if we can not provide funds as loans, we involve the community/families in setting up projects, and thus they contribute to it. We also encourage recipients to share the benefits of projects with others. And in this



We use a hand-operated Vonder rig so that communities can be involved in drilling wells. They also collect sand for cement.

way they become donors, and not just recipients. In many projects, this sharing of benefits is monitored.

Two examples of this is found in our provision of goats and wells: Where we pro-

vide goats, families construct their own kraal, and give one of their first kids to another family. When we construct wells we involve the community in every stage of construction, and train a committee to maintain it.

FOURTH: Providing knowledge and training.

We have access to so much information in the West which is not available to others, and we need to share this where appropriate. I have just written that it is wrong to impose projects on others. But there are groups who I believe have made the opposite mistake: They say that they will only do what they are asked to do by beneficiaries. And I think that this is also wrong, because it robs them of life-changing information.

The middle, and I think better, path is to work in partnership, with both sides providing information, and making suggestions and requests; and then only proceeding when there is complete agreement.

Let me give just one example of the importance of providing information: In the Lower Shire it is not traditional to use fertilizer, and thus crop yields are very low. We therefore explained the benefits of fertilizer to a group of pastors, and asked if they would like to try it and then let us know the results.

With their agreement, we provided funds for fertilizer in villages where these pastors lived. They returned the following year, and shared with great excitement the results that they had seen: They told us that one acre without fertilizer had produced 5-30 50kg bags of maize. But with fertilizer they had received 55-70 50kg bags of maize. And, as a result, they are now motivated to save funds from their increased yields, to buy their own fertilizer from now on.

As well as providing information as we have just described, project co-ordinators give training on maintaining any machinery that is bought. Beneficiaries also receive training on keeping accounts where this is appropriate, and teaching on the importance of budgeting, and of saving some of the benefits of each project for future emergency situations.