

DEPENDENCE QUESTIONS IN CHRISTIAN SUPPORT OF FOREIGN WORKERS

Galen Currah, October 2005

Thesis: There are not enough informed, rich Christians to finance the evangelisation, discipleship and material development of the world's needy and neglected. Therefore, 1000s of small, local, self-reliant churches and organizations must rise to the task, depending on God and local resources.

Dependence: Refusal to work unless others pay, especially to work without receiving foreign funds.

Distinguish: *Relief:* give generously to meet the urgent needs of war and disaster victims.

Development: give wisely to promote local self-reliance.

Local support: gifts, talents and time donated by local folks.

Foreign support: gifts, talents and time donated by outsiders.

Partnership: a mix of gifts, talents and time donated by local folks and by outsiders.

In proposing to give to others, ask, Will the recipients ...

- Thank us or thank God?
- Become dependent of us or on God?
- Seek more from us or from God?
- Serve us or serve God?

In responding to requests, we ask ourselves,

- Is the asker active in the work or waiting to enter the work?
- Are there others doing similar work who are more needy?
- Does the asker also sacrifice for the work?
- Does the asker work amongst the poor and neglected?
- Would our giving stop local folks giving?
- Would our gifts stimulate more work?

Unfortunately ...

- There are church and mission workers who are unwilling to depend on local support.
- There are foreigners who give generously without regard for their action's effect.
- There are local organizations who use foreign money to hire personnel away from local churches and make them their own.
- Some locals make a career of exploiting generous foreigners.
- Some local ministries fire local workers when they can get a "free" foreign worker.
- Local workers do not always do the work better than do foreign workers.
- Local workers sometimes suffer because local leaders keep them poor.

When foreigners give unwisely,

- They maintain less productive ministries and unscrupulous locals.
- The local poor stop giving.
- Local ministries cannot survive when foreign support declines and stops.
- Other locals become jealous.
- Strengthen a rebellious spirit and unproductive methods that look familiar to foreigners.
- Church funds get spent on secular work and secular funds on church work.

Give only to support work that ...

- Will keep on doing their work with or without foreign support.
- Already has local support.
- Has a plan to expand in proportion to new support.
- Receipts gifts, keeps honest books, and makes regular reports to donors.

Give under agreed conditions :

- There are agreed plans on the use of funds from outside.
- The recipients are competent to keep accounts and to make reports.
- Foreign funds do not amount to more than 20% of the local operating budget.
- Foreign funds are to decline over time, and there is an agreed termination date.
- Give to finance projects and not to support persons. (Projects may include wages.)
- Give only to organizations and not to individuals.

Look for projects that ...

- Start small and prove their effectiveness.
- Have workers in place and on-going activities.
- Keep evangelism, church-planting, and social projects in balance.
- Have the respect of other leaders, donors and local folks.
- Work in partnership and co-ordinate with other organizations.
- Evaluate, report their outcomes, and adjust their budgets and activities accordingly.

Look for leaders who ...

- Demonstrate unfeigned passion for the souls and betterment of their people.
- Have a reputation for repentance, honesty with money, and ministry outcomes.
- Can articulate their vision, goals, and plans for greater effectiveness.
- Have kept on with their work during times of financial difficulty.
- Give public praise to others for their sacrifice, hard work and good character.
- Seek to remain locally supported except for Kingdom expansion projects.
- Seek to provide for the needs of their co-workers.
- Effectively reproduce themselves by raising up and training new leaders.

Remain wary of leaders who ...

- Write to you seeking financial help.
- Remind you about how poor they and their population are.
- Make bold claims about how locals are more effective than foreign workers.
- Speak about their personal suffering, dedication, spiritual gifts, effectiveness, and the like.
- Show plans for great work which they intend to start when the finances come in.
- Star themselves as prima donnas on stage.

Experienced donors often ...

- Match local giving at some agreed proportion, in order to stimulate more local giving.
- Give only when other donors do the same, as a check on their own discernment.
- Provide training to local ministry personnel in leadership, accounting and practical work.
- Start with small gifts for small projects to help local workers grow in competence.
- Recommend proven projects and leaders to potential donors.
- Check things out on the ground before committing resources.
- Expect and finance training, accounting and evaluation.
- Give in response to facts about need instead of feelings of pity and guilt.

Form a judgement about a project's ...

- *Methods*, how reproducible are they in the local culture and economy?
- *Training*, how affordable, timely, transmittable, and adapted are they to local needs?
- *Materials*, are they in a language that users can read, at a level they can understand, in terms that fit their culture, available where they are, at a price they can afford?
- *Personnel*, how experienced, trained, willing, and socially acceptable are they?